

What is distinctive about one's call as a Christian?

From the standpoint of Christian faith and witness, one's call as a Christian is distinctive in that one is thereby placed among the decisively called.

The decisively called are distinguished from both the implicitly called and the explicitly called.

Any being who is human is thereby placed among the *implicitly* called as soon and as long as she or he is human at all—being human and being at least implicitly called being simply two ways of saying one and the same thing.

Any human being who is religious or for whom the claim of some religion presents a genuine option is thereby placed among the *explicitly* called as soon and as long as she or he is religious at all or has a genuine option of becoming such—being religious or having an option of becoming religious and being explicitly as well as implicitly called being simply two ways of saying one and the same thing.

Any human being who is Christian or for whom the claim of the Christian religion presents a genuine option is thereby placed among the *decisively* called as soon and as long as she or he is Christian or has a genuine option of becoming such—being Christian or having an option of becoming such and being decisively as well as implicitly and explicitly called being —from the standpoint of Christian faith and witness—simply two ways of saying one and the same thing.

But in what, exactly, does one's being decisively called consist? It does not consist simply in one's being called to authentic existence, since both the implicitly called and the explicitly called are, in their respectively different ways, also called to that. It consists, rather, in one's being called both to the effective use and to the valid administration of the *primal* sacrament of the Christian religion, viz., Jesus Christ. Implied by this call, of course, is also the call both to use and to validly administer the *primary* sacrament of the

Christian religion, viz., the visible church, together with such other *secondary* sacraments as it in turn constitutes.

Obviously, the same answer could be given by speaking in terms of word rather than sacraments—or, more generally still, in terms of means of salvation. The main idea, in any case, is that a religion is "a means of ultimate transformation" (Streng), from which it follows that, from the standpoint of any particular religion, it is the means by the effective use and the valid administration of which a human being undergoes the ultimate transformation from inauthentic to authentic existence and thereby becomes of service to her or his fellow human beings in undergoing the same transformation.

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