



The Entrepreneurial Vocation

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Introduction

To those of us who have spent most of our years in the business world, the title of this essay by Rev. Robert Sirico may sound a bit strange. In my own experience, the very word *vocation* generally meant a *calling*, which, in turn, usually implied a calling to life as a priest or nun, or as a clergyman or missionary. The question the title raises, then, is this: How do the concepts of entrepreneur and vocation come together and make sense?

In this essay, Father Sirico answers that question. The case can certainly be made that all entrepreneurs believe strongly enough in their ideas to accept the fact that those ideas convey a calling—a calling that spurs them on, often to risk everything to make it happen. If a product or service is successful, it fills a need for those buying it, and the entrepreneur may then go on to fame and riches. Even if a given product is unsuccessful, the entrepreneur can maintain confidence if he is convinced that God has chosen him to take on this kind of task as his life's work.

Father Sirico points out the need for entrepreneurs to have the moral framework within which to understand their efforts. This understanding helps the businessman to affirm the dignity of the enterprise that he has undertaken. It also imparts certain responsibilities to him; he cannot think of his business efforts without reference to the dictates of his conscience and the religious principles to which he adheres.

The essay also highlights the need for others, especially religious leaders, to recognize and appreciate the moral character of the entrepreneur's efforts. Many religious leaders are suspicious of the free enterprise system and of the entrepreneur. Father Sirico not only attempts to clarify the division between businessmen and clergy but also offers a way to bridge that gap. He does this by elucidating the Christian principles that are inherent to the entrepreneurial spirit.

Father Sirico is uniquely positioned to analyze the spheres of religion and business. As a member of the clergy, he has undergone the seminary experience and theological education and has worked as a pastor. He understands the requirements of social justice and exhibits a deep concern for those who have not been able to share in the wealth created by the market economy.

At the same time, he has been a student of the free enterprise system. He has written and spoken extensively on the excellence of a society that is both free and virtuous. He has also interacted with and guided business leaders. Father Sirico not only calls for the clergy to engage businessmen and vice versa—he initiates that encounter. I can testify on the basis of firsthand experience that his seminars for business executives are events that put into practice the principles outlined in this essay. I have greatly benefited from Father Sirico's reflections, which have led me to a better understanding of my role as a businessman and of the moral responsibilities that come with that calling.

It is my sincere hope that all entrepreneurs and business leaders (as well as others) will, through this essay, come to a better understanding of the role of entrepreneurship and its sublime dimension as a calling from God.

William E. LaMothe
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