

HOMILY
2ND Sunday Ordinary Time
January 18, 2026

I think we are familiar with the idea of encryption. It is a process of converting information or data into a code so that it is present, but not obvious to people looking at it. I think we have two vocations in our lives. One is public and evident; the other is deeper and not always known to us. It is encrypted.

In the Gospel reading, we meet John the Baptist. John's public vocation was to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching and performing a baptism of repentance. He did not know who he was preparing the way for. His encrypted vocation was to identify the Messiah. He accomplished this in the process of his baptisms of repentance when he saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus. Then he testified that Jesus was the Son of God.

We hear in the psalm today "Here I am, Lord: I come to do your will." This is what we need to be saying to the Lord when we make decisions about our public vocation and when our encrypted vocation unfolds. Our public vocation is normally a conscious one, to be a parent, spouse, nurse, technician, craftsperson, business person. Look at your public vocations and see what has given them purpose and meaning in your life, which may not have been evident when you made those decisions but they are now. Look for patterns.

An example from my life, I have had a series of public vocations. I have a background in psychology and counseling and worked for years at a State Agency with disabled people. I went to law school and practiced law, and now I am a priest. People have looked at that and said "you have really been all over the board." I don't agree with that. I have also had an encrypted vocation that was not always evident or known to me. My encrypted vocation was helping people. I helped disabled people. When I moved into management, I was helping people be the best they could be in their job. As an

attorney I was helping people with their legal issues and as a priest with their spiritual issues. That was not evident to me as I was moving through my life, but as I look back I can identify it as my purpose.

Your encrypted vocation unfolds based upon your reactions to the events of your life. We are here in this place, at this time and with these people for a reason. We will never know the complete encrypted purpose of our lives on this earth. It keeps unfolding. The things that happen in our lives happen for a reason, both the good things and the suffering, but I think it is more the suffering that gives our life purpose and meaning. Let me give you an example from my life. My Father died when I was 15 years old. This was one of the sufferings. I learned what it is to grieve the loss of a loved one at a young age. I also learned that things can happen in your life that you have no control over but can drastically change your life in an instant. It helped me to accept these things in the future. My sister was just 3 years old when my Father died. I played a role in raising her. I have a sense of what it is to be a parent without ever really being a parent. All of these lessons have helped me carry out my public vocations in many ways. I did not know how I would use these lessons at the time, but eventually I did. I could have reacted very differently to this time of suffering and my life would have ended up very different. I think I trusted and followed God's will for me. It is always God's will that we do the right thing.

I think it is very helpful to look at the things that have happened in our lives and look for patterns. I am not sure what the future holds for me but I am pretty sure it is going to involve helping people in one way or another. It may be in a way that has never occurred to me up until now. Look at your public vocations and look for patterns. Take a look at your encrypted vocation. Why did things happen at that time, in that place and with those people? Particularly examine your periods of suffering. Look for patterns. Ask yourself what you are to learn from it and how you can use it to help others. Have a look at what has happened in your life up until now. When you have to make some decisions say "Here I am, Lord: I come to do your will."