



By Sister Kathleen Bryant, R.S.C.

DISCERNING YOUR VOCATION



NRVC
National Religious
Vocation Conference

**RELIGIOUS LIFE
& DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sister Kathleen Bryant, R.S.C. is a Religious Sister of Charity. For 21 years, Sister Kathleen served as a talent scout for *God as a Vocation Director* for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She grew up as a California beach girl who entered the convent in 1967 and served as a missionary in Africa for five years before responding to the call in vocation ministry. Sister Kathleen, author of numerous articles and books, currently ministers in the field of spirituality as a facilitator, retreat director, spiritual director, and workshop presenter. She earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Graduate Theological Foundation and a Master's degree in Spirituality from the University of San Francisco. Among her passions are connecting people with God in a digital world, teaching discernment and prayer, and working for the abolition of human trafficking and slavery.

The information contained in this booklet has been excerpted and adapted with permission from the author from *Vocations Anonymous: a handbook for adults discerning priesthood and religious life*, Chapter 8, published by Rogationist Publications, 2014. The book can be ordered at magazinVoc@aol.com or 818-782 1765. Also available at Amazon.com.

Additional Rogationist Publications include *Vocations and Prayer*, a quarterly magazine on vocations ministry that covers topics of pastoral care for vocations. The Rogationists fundamental mission is to spread the primacy of prayer in fostering vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. Learn more at Rogationists.org.

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Find more resources on prayer and discernment
at the NRVC's VocationNetwork.org.

AS YOU EXPLORE the many different vocations options to priesthood or religious life, you have probably felt a bit overwhelmed. After all, there are more than 800 religious institutes in the United States! So perhaps you have prayed and discerned that God is calling you to priesthood or religious life, but where? Could these be some of your questions?

- Am I called to live in a cloistered, monastic, evangelical, missionary, or an apostolic order?
- Which order?
- How will I know?
- Am I called to be a diocesan priest or a priest that belongs to a religious community?
- Where do I start?

Let me offer some suggestions for dealing with this quandary.

RELIGIOUS LIFE DEFINED

First of all, some definitions are in order. People live out their baptismal call in many different ways.

DIOCESAN PRIEST

Ordained to serve the local Church through parish ministry, although some priests may for a time teach, do retreat work, counseling, or other forms of diocesan service. The diocesan priest makes promises of obedience and celibacy to his bishop. The diocesan priest does not take the vow of poverty or live in community life with rules and a constitution describing his lifestyle. His life's ministry is within the boundaries of a particular diocese or archdiocese. Through parish leadership, preaching, and sacramental ministry, the diocesan priest journeys through life with parishioners. Often small groups of diocesan priests will meet regularly to pray and lend support in living out their priesthood.

The diocesan priest journeys through life with parishioners.



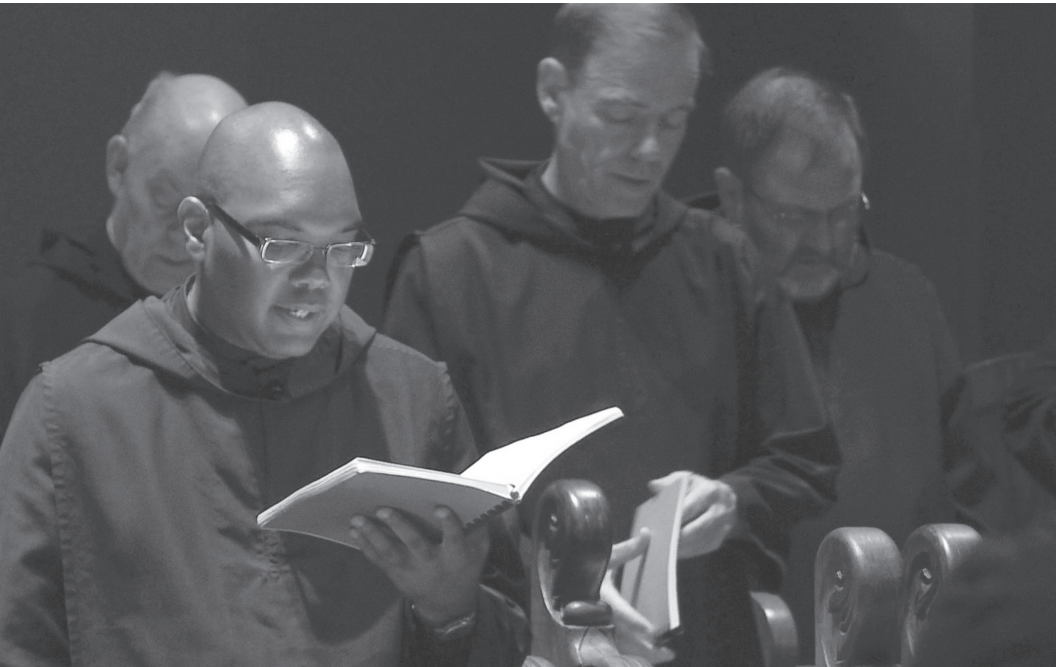
The person
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MEMBER OF A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE

Professes vows, serves in ministry, lives and prays in community, and follows the constitutions and rule of the order. Each religious order is a gift to the Church. Each was founded for a specific purpose. This distinctive purpose and gift is called the *charism* of the order. It is the key to understanding the order's particular spirit, lifestyle, and mission. Decisions and choices are made within the context of the religious order's charism, customs, and constitutions. Living vowed communal life includes a balance of ministry and prayer; however, *monastic life* centers around periods of liturgical prayer whereas *apostolic life* is centered around ministry.

RELIGIOUS PRIEST: Ordained and belongs to an order in which he also professes vows. Most often he lives in community, and his lifestyle and mission are shaped by the particular charism of the community in ways similar to religious brothers. Whereas diocesan priests serve within a particular diocese, religious priests serve the global Church. Although some religious priests serve in parishes, most serve in areas where people are marginalized. Pope Francis is an example of a religious priest as he is a vowed member of the Jesuits. Some other orders of religious priests are the Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Redemptorists, Salesians, and Society of the Divine Word.

RELIGIOUS BROTHER: A vowed man who lives religious life in community. Brothers make up a fifth of all male religious



in the Church, and there are approximately 100 religious institutes in the United States who have brothers. There are two types of religious institutes for brothers. Communities made up of almost all brothers are called lay institutes while communities with a mix of brothers and priests are known as clerical institutes. Imitating Christ by living the gospel, brothers are ministers of mercy and compassion in a variety of ministries. More information about religious brothers can be found in the document *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*, written by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2015). Some examples of communities of brothers are the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Brothers of Congregation of Holy Cross, Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, Brothers of St. Francis Xavier, and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

SISTER CHRISTA PARRA, I.B.V.M.



RELIGIOUS SISTER: Belongs to a religious community of women. She professes vows and serves God according to the charism of the community. Sisters have a long legacy and anticipative future of dedicating their prayer and ministry to serve wherever the need is greatest, particularly with the abandoned, neglected, and underserved. A nun is a religious sister in a cloistered order. There are almost 600 religious institutes for women religious (sisters and nuns) in the United States. Some examples of communities of religious sisters are the Salesian Sisters, Mercy Sisters of the Americas, Carmelites, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, and the Sisters of St. Joseph.

A religious sister belongs to a religious community of women. She professes vows and serves God according to the charism of the community.

MEMBER OF A SECULAR INSTITUTE

A form of consecrated life in which a layperson takes vows. Members do not live together; they manage their own finances and have no single apostolate. They take part in a formation program to prepare for vows and develop a regular prayer life.

MEMBER OF AN ECCLESIAL MOVEMENT

Vowed and mostly non-vowed members who gather for the sake of the mission, to form them in the spirituality of the movement, and support them in their lives. These include Focalare, the Sant'Egigio Community, and the Catholic Worker Movement begun by Venera-



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*Write down
in your
journal
what would
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important to
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ble Dorothy Day. Some members take private vows. Pope Benedict XVI invited members of lay ecclesial movements to “Be builders of a better world, according to the ‘*ordo amoris*’ (order of love) in which the beauty of human life is expressed.”

LAY ASSOCIATE

Lay Associates are women and men who make a formal commitment to a specific religious congregation usually through a process of discernment and formation followed by a commitment ceremony. Associates commit to embody the mission and spirituality of the religious congregation within the Associate’s primary lifestyle and vocation and in relationship with one another. For more information about Lay Associates, visit their website at NACAR.org

DO YOUR HOMEWORK FIRST

Before you begin exploring religious communities it is important that you do some of your own homework first. The first part of this section will offer some suggestions for doing that inner homework. The second part will give you some suggestions for ways of exploring your options.

Knowing yourself and your values is important before you look for a home in a religious community or diocese. Take a personal inventory. Examine the call you are experiencing, preferably with the help of a vocation director and/or spiritual director. It will help to have someone with whom you can articulate the call. At first, that call may seem a vague, indescribable yearning for something more, or a heartfelt sense that God is asking something of you. An authentic

call comes from God through your Baptism and through your parish community. It is confirmed through people who affirm, encourage, and invite you to think about a vocation. The call to priesthood and religious life does not happen outside the context of the faith community. It is not a private deal between God and yourself.

What do people say to you about your vocation? The person you are now, with your particular gifts, qualities, talents, and spirituality, is a clue that can lead you to the diocese or community that will eventually be your home.

Write down in your journal what would be most important to you in living out your baptismal call as a sister, priest, or brother. Prioritize those values, practices, and vision. One way to approach this task is to imagine if you were founding a religious order, or living as a diocesan priest, how you would design the lifestyle, prayer, and focus of this particular vocation.

You might also take an inventory of your strengths, spirituality, gifts, and talents. Spirituality is the personal style in which you relate to God and live out your faith. Here are some examples:

1. My spirituality is based on a reverence for creation as God's gift to us. In the spirit of Francis of Assisi, I feel called to promote a sacred ecology. I often experience God's presence through nature.
2. The heart of my spirituality is the Eucharist. I feel called to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament and also quietly read scripture and meditate.
3. I am excited about God's love. I want to share that love with other people who have not yet discovered how good God is. I experience God's presence in our prayer group, young adult group, and in the retreats we give.
4. I am disturbed by the injustices in the world and feel a passion to do something about it, to work for systemic change for those who are oppressed, to be a voice for the voiceless, to preach the gospel by fighting to change the structures in government and society that keep people in poverty and slavery.

Here are some examples of what might be listed in the inventory of your strengths, gifts, and qualities:

- *Compassion and prudence* (People feel free to open up to me without fear of being judged).
- *Prayerfulness* (I recognize God in daily life).
- *Talent for service and organization* (I can put on programs, organize, and serve with humility and joy).
- *Strength of my convictions and passion to make changes in our*

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world (I can articulate well what I believe and I am an active Christian).

- *Openness, adaptability and flexibility* (I can be at home with people of various cultural backgrounds).

As you reflect and pray about this inner call, spend time listening to what God has to say. God communicates through quiet prayer time, through scripture, the Eucharist, nature, other people, and the events of our lives. Keep track of what has the most impact on you. Which events, phrases from scripture, or comments from friends pierce through you? God speaks to us in our daily lives in myriad ways. Jot down these experiences. They may provide a clearer direction in your search for a community or diocese that resonates with who you are. Some good questions for you to answer for yourself might be:

- Where do I find life? What is most life-giving for me now?
- What is there about me that an order or diocese would welcome? What gifts do I bring?
- What about me might be troublesome for an order or diocese?
- Do I now live simply? How do I live celibately now?
- How would I adapt to living in community?

WHICH WAY TO MY VOCATION?

Depending on your experience, you may or may not have a sense

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about the type of religious life or priesthood God is calling you to. Here's a quick way to get in touch with your leanings toward a specific vocation. List these words on a sheet of paper, leaving spaces between each one:

FOR MEN: hermit – monk – parish priest – active apostolic brother
– religious order priest – missionary priest – missionary brother

FOR WOMEN: cloistered contemplative nun – monastic religious –
missionary sister – apostolic sister religious – evangelical sister

Now spontaneously write one-word associations for each category. Without censoring, jot down any images, feelings, or descriptive phrases about that particular vocation. For example, under “missionary,” you might respond: adventurous, challenging, difficult, poor, dangerous. Under “hermit” you might write: lonely, too quiet, far removed, prayerful, penitential. Again, these are only personal reactions and not necessarily the reality for all people.

Look over the list. Can you identify yourself with any of those associations? Which one of these would be closest to who you are, to who you feel called to become, to what brings you joy?

SOME PREREQUISITES FOR ENTERING

Every diocese or religious community has its own requirements for acceptance of candidates. Complete medical examinations and psychological testing is conducted before being admitted to formation. Every applicant must have a criminal background check, including a national sex-offender registry check and a child-abuse history clearance. An applicant with an established allegation of sexually abusing a minor will not be admitted to formation.

Most orders and seminaries require that you complete a financial disclosure form, credit report, and enter free of all debt, including student loans. In 2012, the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate to study the impact of student loans on the men and women who are discerning religious life. This study found that one out of three people applying to religious life have student loans in excess of \$21,000. In response to the study NRVC established the Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations. More information is available at NFCRV.org.

Most communities and dioceses require two years of intentional celibacy before entrance. If the applicant has been previously married, a marriage certificate, marriage annulment paper, and/or certificate of the death of a spouse is required.



SISTER MARY GRACE, O.C.D., CARMEL OF TERRE HAUTE, IN

Energy for the contemplative cloistered vocation is often found in the desire to live a life of prayer and penance as a service to the Church and the entire world—to live a life hidden with Christ in God.

It is expected that a candidate receive the sacraments regularly, pray, and have an ability to talk about faith. Good physical, emotional, and spiritual health is also often a requirement, as well as a demonstration of the openness to learn. You must also have received all the sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

If you haven't thought about any of these before, you might begin working on them now. Sometimes the vocation director may ask you to get counseling, or to work on personal issues before entering. This would be to your advantage, not a reason to dismiss one group and run to another that will take you right away. Try to see the invitation to growth as one coming from God.

PREPARE TO MAKE A VISIT

Once you have done the homework of personal reflection, you will be better prepared to visit communities. Compare your search to the real estate business. If you want to rent an apartment or buy a house, you go looking with some of your own needs in mind. Before you start exploring religious orders or diocese, you want to have a sense of self and of your own values and call. As you discern, ask yourself where the desire and the energy is when you think about your future as a priest or religious.

One of the first choices you will encounter is that between contemplative and active vocations.

CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

The focus of the contemplative is prayer. That is not to say that active religious and diocesan priests are not contemplatives. Neither is it true to say that contemplatives are not in ministry of service to the Church. Some common myths about the cloistered life are:

- You have to be an introvert to be a contemplative.
- Anyone in a cloister is out of touch with the world!
- The more loud, vivacious, and funny the person is, the less s/he is called to the cloistered life!

If any of the above is your reason for dismissing the idea of a cloistered, contemplative life, you better look again!

Contemplatives are free women and men, and do not identify their lives as “confined.” They are not usually people who have had remarkable visions; rather they are faithful community members, thinking of others and praying for the needs of the world. You’ll hear laughter when you visit!

Energy for the contemplative cloistered vocation is often found in the desire to live a life of prayer and penance as a service to the Church and the entire world—to live a life hidden with Christ in God. Most bishops, when founding new dioceses, ask for a contemplative community to come to the diocese because they know that the contemplative communities are power-houses of prayer.

ACTIVE LIFE

If you are drawn to the active life, you may find energy in imagining yourself going out to people in the “marketplace” with the good news. Propelled by an animated prayer life, a person moves out into ministry—teaching, preaching, pastoring, celebrating the sacraments, nursing, and providing social service. You may have a strong desire to make a difference in the world and help people in their daily struggles and

If you are drawn to the active life, you may find energy in imagining yourself going out to people, to the “marketplace” with the good news.



BROTHERS OF THE SACRED HEART

have a positive impact in service to God and the Church.

Given your background and particular personality, do you feel called to the cloister or to an active ministerial life? Over time, use your imagination to fantasize about following a contemplative vocation, then switch, and dream about what your life would look like in an active community. Where is the most enthusiasm? That enthusiasm is a good indicator of where you may belong.

At some stage in your discernment, whether you feel called to the cloistered contemplative life or not, you may want to visit one of these communities and ask them to pray for you in your discernment. It's a good investment!

Reading about religious orders and the lives of the saints or perusing contemporary periodicals on Catholic spirituality and religious life can help you learn about church vocations. Don't move forward with misinformation



Begin with the priests and religious you know and feel comfortable talking to. Ask if you could talk to them seriously about a church vocation.

you might have accrued from stereotypes or Hollywood images of priests or religious. Part of the discernment process is gathering data and getting accurate information.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW

Begin with the priests and religious you know and feel comfortable talking to. Contact a sister, brother, or priest you knew growing up or at school). Ask if you could talk to them seriously about a church vocation.

VOCATION OFFICES

Call the diocesan vocation office and ask for an appointment to see the vocation director. Some vocation directors are full time; others may have limited time because of other responsibilities. Expect to be asked some questions over the phone before the appointment is set. Some offices have directories and information on the religious communities working the diocese. You will be able to get feedback, information, and direction regarding church vocations. You may also plug into the vocation discernment programs offered in the diocese. The National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD) can let you know

how to contact your local vocation director at NCDVD.org. If you are looking at religious life, contact National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC), at NRVC.net. You can also find both conferences on Facebook and other social networks.

DIRECTORIES OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Browse through a directory with a highlighter (if the book is your personal copy). If a particular word, phrase, value, or charism leaps out at you while reading the description of a religious order or diocesan lifestyle, then highlight it. It is not wise to try to read through a directory all at once. Periodically, continue browsing and highlighting. Later on, when you flip through the pages, you may notice an emerging pattern of values, charisms, or spirits that resonate with you. This will also help you learn about different vocations.

Some printed and online resources contain excellent information about religious institutes. Take a look at *Vocations and Prayer* magazine (published by the Rogationists), *A Guide to Religious Ministries* (Catholic News Publishing Company), *¡Oye!* (Claretian Publications), and *Vision Vocation Guide* (an NRVC resource). Spend time on VISION's VocationNetwork.org, which has an extensive online library, community search feature, vocation events calendar, and Vocation Match, a helpful discernment tool.

Many religious communities and dioceses have websites that provide a rich source of information. Use a web browser and search

Personal contact, face to face with those who belong to the diocese or community you are exploring, is the best way to begin. Sister Colleen Smith, A.S.C.J. shares a meal with participants at a discernment retreat.



SISTER COLLEEN SMITH, A.S.C.J.

*if working
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key words like “Catholic vocations” or “Catholic priest, sister, or brother.” If you are interested in a particular order, search under the name of that order. YouTube offers great resources for prayer and discernment and exploring religious life and priesthood.

Contact the communities or diocesan seminaries that appeal to you. If you write or email, keep it brief, ask for more information, and inquire about the possibility of visiting a nearby convent, residence, or seminary. If you phone, ask for an appointment to see the vocation contact person in a community near you.

VISIT THE COMMUNITY OR DIOCESAN SEMINARY

Personal contact, face to face with those who belong to the diocese or community you are exploring, is the best way to begin. When you meet the vocation director, ask if it is possible to pray, eat, or socialize with the members of the community. As you visit, you may want to be aware of whether or not you feel at home with the group. Apart from the inevitable initial shyness and anxiety, you may notice that you feel more at home in some places than in others.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

When visiting, you may wonder what to talk about. You will also be asked questions about yourself. Discernment is a mutual process. A

vocation director will be interested in the whole of your life—not only the part that you will label “spiritual.” You will be asked about your age, educational background, job, relationships, family, service, and involvement with community or parish. You are free to ask questions too.

If you have done the inner work suggested in Part I, your questions will flow from what is most important to you and what is important to the community. For example, if being with the poor and working with the poor is one of your values, then ask how the community lives an option for the poor. The same follows for the spirituality, sense



BROTHER OCTAVIO DURAN, O.F.M.



SISTER COLLEEN GIBSON, S.S.J.

of Church, and desire for community life. Ask some general questions about how the vows as they relate to your values. Consider starting with asking about the community's charism, or main mission.

CHARISM

A charism is that particular gift that a religious community or diocesan priest lives. The charism will give you a sense of a particular community's or diocese's purpose and meaning. You might want to ask how the community lives out the charism in its current ministries. Other questions you might ask include:

- What is your charism and how do you live it out?
- How do you live community life together?
- What ministries are you involved in?
- How do you pray together? What's the emphasis in your prayer life?
- What do you look for in an applicant?

POVERTY

- How are personal needs met?
- How is budgeting handled?
- Are members required to ask permission for basic needs?

You are free to ask questions too. One question you might ask: Are friendships outside the community allowed or encouraged?

- How are members accountable to one another?
- How does the group communally express their vow of poverty?
- Are the members expected to engage only in ministries that pay a stipend or salary?

CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS, US PROVINCE



CELIBACY

- What kind of preparation and education is there for chaste celibate living?
- Are friendships outside the community allowed or encouraged?
- Is the body viewed as a gift or as a hindrance to holiness?
- What is the policy of the community or diocese with regards to homosexuality?
- How does bonding take place in the community?
- What mechanisms are in place to promote community?

Sometimes the logo, symbol, or emblem of a community will reveal a lot about the order's focus.

OBEDIENCE

- How are decisions made about ministry and work assignments?
- Is there a process for choosing leadership? Is dialogue and consultation part of decision making?

MINISTRY

- How are members prepared for ministry?

You would *not* want to ask all of these questions on your first visit or communication. They would feel on trial! The more sensitive questions could be brought up later on if you pursue a discernment process with them.

How a community does ministry varies depends on the charism. Mother Teresa's sisters, the Missionaries of Charity, give direct service to the poor by attending to the dying on the streets, feeding the hungry, and providing shelter for the homeless. The Sisters of Social Service are engaged in legislative efforts to fight for more just benefits and conditions for the poor in our society. Their founder, Margaret Slachta, said that some may dry the tears of the poor, but "my sisters will work to prevent injury being inflicted in the first place." "We are to be pioneers of a better world, working for social reform." Sister

Simone Campbell, S.S.S., was being faithful to this charism as she hit the road with Nuns on the Bus. Both Mother Teresa and Margaret Slachta's communities serve the poor, but in different ways.

Each community incarnates the gospel with a focus on a specific aspect of Jesus' message. This may not necessarily happen just through ministry but also through the community's mission, or way of being present to the world. For example, Jesuit spirituality aims at finding God in all things. Benedictines treasure the liturgy in Eucharist and Divine Office as well as the rhythm of work and prayer in daily life. Dominicans strive to reflect truth in their preaching and value lifelong education and study. As you explore spiritualities, which resonate with your own?

Sometimes the community logo, symbol, or emblem will reveal a lot about the order's focus. Notice the language used as the religious describe themselves.

You may also want to find out some basic statistics regarding the community. How many people are in the formation program? What is the median age? Which countries are they located in? How many belong to this particular community or diocese?

DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD

There are some special considerations for those looking at diocesan priesthood. The call to diocesan priesthood comes from God, often through the local parish community. It is confirmed in the local

Get to know the members of the community. Observe them interacting with each other. Get to know their spirituality and ministry. Father Michael Berry, O.C.D. meets after Mass with young men who attended a "come & see" weekend.

MARY ANNE URLAKIS



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church, and after ordination it is in the local church in which the priest serves.

- What support systems are available for the diocesan clergy?
- What are the educational requirements for the seminary?
- Does the diocese have its own seminary? Where do the seminarians study?
- What types of ministries are the priests involved in?
- What are the urgent needs of the diocese? What kind of person would make a good priest and be able to help meet some of these needs?
- What kind of living arrangements do the priests have? Are they required to live in the parish rectory, or are other arrangements possible?
- What is the cultural makeup of the Catholic population of the diocese?

AFTER THE VISIT

After you visit the convent, house of formation, rectory, or seminary, it is important that you give yourself some time to reflect on what happened. Spend time mentally going over the visit. In a notebook,



write down your impressions, likes, and dislikes:

1. Describe what you were attracted to or felt comfortable with when you observed the community or seminary during your visit. (Perhaps you could relate to the way the seminarians joked around together, the camaraderie the brothers had with each other, the way the sisters spoke about the people they worked with.)
2. Describe what you were *not* attracted to or not comfortable with during the visit. (Perhaps you couldn't relate to their focus, the way they prayed together, what the community was interested in, how they interacted.)

Keeping track of visits to communities or seminaries in this reflective process will clarify for you where you are not called as well as where you may be called. Get to know the members of the community. Observe them interacting with each other. Get to know their spirituality and ministry and plot this against your own personal history, personality, and background.

As you reflect, keep in mind that the perfect community or diocese does not exist! Try to distinguish between the very real human imperfections you may see, and even with those imperfections, whether you may be called to join in the community's or the diocesan mission.

Two people visiting the same place could have opposite reactions. Each community is a gift to the Church. There is a colorful diversity in the way religious life is lived in the United States. Communities and dioceses cross the spectrum, from traditional style to those living on the frontiers of an evolving form of religious life for the future. You need to find where you can best be called to be your most authentic self and where you would be most at home. Where would you be truly challenged? All this needs to be done in the context of prayer, reflection, and spiritual direction.

MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

One of the prerequisites for entering formation for the priesthood or religious life is some experience of serving others. If you are already involved in a parish ministry, such as serving as a teacher, catechist, lector, eucharistic minister, Catholic worker, on the social justice committee, or a youth leader, this experience will help you discern your call to ministry.

If you feel called to be a parish priest, ask a priest if you could spend a day following him around. Get a first-hand taste of what diocesan priesthood is all about. If there is a seminary near you, arrange to spend a day going to classes with the seminarians attending



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liturgy and sharing in meals with them. Ask the seminarians questions about their formation program and lifestyle.

Another fruitful way to explore a community is to spend a day in ministry with a sister, brother, or priest. The vocation director can recommend someone who you could “shadow” for a day. This will give you an insight into the vision a community may have for the way it serves others. Observe how the priest or religious interacts and is involved in ministry. Some communities offer a week-long summer experience of ministering with the community. Others have associate programs that allow you to live in community and minister for about six months to a year with the order.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT: GOD IS IN CHARGE

It can be overwhelming to think that you have to go through this process on your own. There are so many religious orders, so much literature, so many choices . . . but remember that God leads and guides you. God uses events and other people to help you co-create your future. What may seem like an accidental meeting could well be a providential one. You may have searched the internet, thumbed through pages of directories, and scanned tons of advertisements and brochures and then one day “accidentally” meet someone in a grocery store who talks about a particular community or seminary. Keep your exploration in the context of the belief that it is God who providentially leads and guides you. Remember that the process is mutual. The community is also listening to God and will give you honest feedback.



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