

RELIGIOUS LIFE FOR MEN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is religious life for men?

Religious life is a form of consecration to God: "characterised by the public profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in a stable state of life recognised by the Church".

The specific contribution of consecrated persons, both men and women, to evangelisation is first of all the witness of a life given totally to God and to their brothers and sisters, in imitation of the Saviour who, out of love for humanity, made himself a servant. In the work of salvation, in fact, everything comes from sharing in the divine agape. Consecrated persons make visible, in their consecration and total dedication, the loving and saving presence of Christ, the One consecrated by the Father, sent in mission. Allowing themselves to be won over by him (cf. Phil 3:12), they prepare to become, in a certain way, a prolongation of his humanity. The consecrated life eloquently shows that the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers (# 76).

What is involved in entering the religious life for men?

Discernment, as with all vocations, is the first step in entering the religious life, and continues throughout the period of "initial formation". This period normally includes the time of postulancy (pre-novitiate), novitiate (an intense period of discernment of at least one year in preparation for profession of vows), and years in temporary (or simple) profession. Finally, after a number of years, a man who has properly discerned his vocation and undergone the necessary training will take final (or perpetual) vows for life. Some religious men remain as brothers and others become priests.

What are the characteristics of the vocation to religious life?

The call to religious life includes:

1. Living out the precepts of the evangelical counsels through vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.
2. Drawing inspiration from the charism of the founder of their particular order or institute.
3. Ordinarily living the fraternal life in community.

Reference: John Paul II, Vita Consecrata (Consecrated Life), Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 1996

PRAYER FOR VOCATION

Almighty God,

You have made me to know you,
to love you and to serve you,
and thereby to find and to fulfil myself.

I know you are in all things,
and that every path can lead me to you.
But of them all, there is one especially
by which you want me to come to you.

Since I will do what you want of me,
I pray you, send your Holy Spirit to me:
into my mind,
to show me what you want of me;
into my heart,
to give me the determination to do it;
and to do it with all my love, with all my mind
and with all my strength right to the end.

Amen.

WEBSITES

www.catholicvocation.org.au
www.capuchinfriars.org.au

[www.vatican.va/roman_curia/
congregations/ccsclife/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/index.htm)

www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/jp2vita.htm

[www.catholicity.com/catechism/
consecrated_life.html](http://www.catholicity.com/catechism/consecrated_life.html)

WANT TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT YOUR VOCATION?

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"You will never know until you give it a go." This is the sense I had when I was thinking about joining a Religious Order. I recognised this desire in my heart to give my life for the service of Jesus Christ and his Church.

In some ways it was a little bit of a surprise. I had not thought about being a brother or a priest when I was growing up. I think in some ways I did not think that sort of thing was even an option. I was doing well at school and so my mind was on what kind of great job I could get. In all this thinking though, there was an inkling to actually do something that was more meaningful with my life. As I did not think priesthood and religious life was an option I looked rather to pursue my interests in history and languages and become a teacher. Even though I liked this option there was still something else I wanted to do, but I just could not seem to figure it out. Many jobs and degrees which I looked at were appealing but nothing really got my attention. For me this was frustrating because I did not know where I was heading. I guess I had the mentality that you had to have everything worked out by the time you finished school and were heading to university.

I did go to university but I was carrying this uncertainty about what to do, along with a desire to do something more than what I was doing. It was while studying for a Bachelor of Arts that I attended a Mass with a few friends where I was awoken to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. It all seemed to hit me right there. I realised very clearly that Jesus Christ is real.

It was at that point that I actually started to communicate to the Lord and so I made a bit of a bargain. I said something like this "Lord if you show me where to go and what to do I will follow you anywhere." I guess he took me at my word. I had a new focus after this Mass and I knew I had a choice: I could just let it wane or I could do something about it.

After realising that there was this desire in my heart for serving the Lord 24/7, I still had to find out where I could best live this out. Initially I thought about different orders of priests and brothers like one would think about a career. I soon realised I was "over thinking" things.

I had met a number of Capuchin priests and brothers from many different countries. I recognised that they all shared something in common even though they were from different parts of the world. It was not necessarily about what they did but how they did it that struck a chord with me. The Capuchins, inspired by St Francis, simply seek to imitate Christ crucified, through a life of prayer, fraternity and action.

Through this realisation I began to let go of where I thought I should go and start to see what was right in front of me. I say this because I found myself spending much time at St Anthony's Shrine in Hawthorn and feeling very much at home with the friars there.

What I recognised in the Capuchins was their sincere desire to follow Christ, in humility and obedience. I often saw the way the friars responded to the needs of others, especially in regard to the sacraments and also those in material need.

I wanted to do this. I wanted to live in common with other priests and brothers who strove relentlessly to be at the service of the Lord no matter what demands this entailed. The Capuchin saints are so different in what they did but they

did it all with that humble servant's heart. Our most famous Capuchin saint, Padre Pio, inspires me to serve the Lord through all life's trials especially to those in need of the mercy of God.

After all of this started to sink in I still had to take the step trusting in the Lord's guidance. In some senses it was hard to take the step, because I was waiting for the Lord to give me some great clear sign. However, what I received instead was the courage and the trust needed to simply say "Yes". I realised that I could not wait until everything seemed perfect because this would never happen. I had to give the Lord a chance and therefore, start the process of applying.

It is only going through the process and now looking back over the last six years that I realise that I would never have found a clear answer to the questions I was asking in relation to my vocation. I had to trust the Lord and still do every day, asking him continually to show me how to live the Gospel life.

The charism of the friars which I recognised from the beginning I have grown to understand and appreciate. I am blessed to see and share in the work of the Capuchins in many different ways, striving always to act in the humble yet strong way that St Francis exemplified.

If there is one thing I have learnt it is that we need to give our lives over to the Lord and he will reward us 100-times over. If I had not taken the challenge to follow Christ as a Capuchin then I know that I would look back in many years and wonder what could have been. Thanks be to God always that I had the grace to respond! Now I know where the Lord wants me because I dared to trust Jesus Christ enough to give it a go.

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