

RELIGIOUS LIFE FOR WOMEN

Who are Women Religious?

Called by a special grace, as brides of Christ, women religious follow Him in that form of life which He made His own when He came to redeem mankind. Entering into the mystery of the redemption of the world, their gift of self becomes a gift Christ can use for this mission (cf VC #34).

What is the Religious Life for Women?

Through lives of contemplative prayer and sacrifice hidden in the cloister, or through lives of apostolic outreach in the most diverse situations of our modern world, these women religious manifest the radiance of a life totally given with Christ and in Christ (cf CCC #193).

“Holiness is the fruit of the encounter with him in the many presences in which we can discover his face and at the same time the face of the Risen One. Recognising him requires a gaze of faith, which is acquired through the habitual reading of the Word of God, through prayer, and above all through the exercise of charity because the Mystery can only be fully known through love” (SAfC #23).

“Religious profession is considered to be a special and fruitful deepening of the consecration received in Baptism” (VC n. 30). When the vows are lived out faithfully, Christ effects a transformation in the woman. All that is not of God passes away, and the person is drawn into intimate union with Him. In participating in His Divine Life they also share in His mission. “Do not forget that you, in a very special way, can and must say that you not only belong to Christ but that ‘you have become Christ’ (Gal 2:20) (n.109).

Religious Life in the Third Millennium

“The path which consecrated life is called to follow, at the beginning of the new millennium, is guided by the contemplation of Christ...a gaze fixed, more than ever, on the face of the Lord” (SAfC).

The Church and the world today need the shining witness of women religious, radiant with love of Christ, poured out in a life of total self-giving for the sake of the Kingdom.

Reference: Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church; Vita Consecrata - Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II; Starting Afresh from Christ - A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium, Congregation for Institute for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

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.mg.org.au

www.catholicovocations.org.au

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

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

WANT TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT YOUR VOCATION?

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SR BERNADETTE PIKE MG



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During my school years I attended Sunday Mass with my family. From Year 12 onwards I was involved on and off with different groups in the Church, but the faith formation was minimal. Because of the lack of depth, any experience of God was short lived and didn't seem to effect much change within me.

During my studies at uni, my heart was set on finding a suitable boyfriend, being esteemed by those around me, working towards a successful career in law, and having a good time socially. Some might say that I had everything- a course that I enjoyed, a car, family and friends, rewarding opportunities to help those less fortunate and a good job. But I still wasn't satisfied.

I loved to go out with my friends and drink. Many of the problems deep in my heart seemed to go

away after a few drinks (it was hard to face the reality that this was only an illusion). While my prayer life was almost non-existent, I can remember stumbling out from a few parties to flop on the road verge and talk very frankly with God. There was an emptiness within me and none of the 'good' things in my life were able to perform the transformation that I knew was needed in my heart, nor could they satisfy my insatiable desire for intimacy. I needed Christ himself.

I spoke about God with a few close friends, but any faith I had was shallow. Religion was an abstract structure of ideas to me and I had not really learnt about my Catholic faith nor how to grow in a personal relationship with Christ. God was reaching out to me, but I continued to make decisions in my personal life that caused the ear of my heart to be deaf to what God was saying to me.

Towards the later part of 2000, I joined a rosary group. I really didn't like the rosary and was not interested in anything to do with our Blessed Mother, but I went along because a few of my close friends were there each week. To my surprise, Mary took me by the hand and led me straight to Jesus! I began to fall in love, not with an idea, but with a person, in fact the Person I had always been looking for.

This special little group prayed, discussed our Catholic faith and shared our personal lives together. One young man began to discern a vocation to the priesthood. I challenged him to confront his fears about consecrated life, but, to my dismay, he threw my questions back at me! Finally, in August 2001 I wrote to God in my prayer journal:

"I want to thank you for the joy I am discovering (over the last month) about the possibility of becoming a sister, a bride of yours...It's weird how I've never really opened myself to the idea, until I really surrendered everything about me to you and started praying the rosary daily. A lot of my issues with being [in a religious vocation]... have been resolved over the last few months... life as a sister has suddenly become a possibility - an exciting possibility. I can't believe my change of heart. It's fast and scary because I have always been so opposed to religious life. Even when I enjoyed my time with the Franciscan sisters in Melbourne, I couldn't imagine committing myself for life to that way of living."

I have learnt that our Lord often calls those you would not expect, the least likely. I'm blessed that He chooses the weak because it meant that He chose me. My discernment culminated in the acceptance of my calling from God in January 2002. Shortly after that my spiritual director began preparing me to live a consecrated life, and I began my search for the community I was called to join.

As I explored different orders, I began working for a law firm and completed my first year of work ('articles of clerkship') before being admitted to the bar. Responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I then began to work for the Diocesan Respect Life Office. After staying with numerous communities and waiting for the Lord's direction, in March 2004, the idea of the 'John Paul II Sisters' was revealed. I had found my home with the Missionaries of the Gospel.

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