

A Vocation Story...



As Sister Mary Catharine of Jesus Perry, O.P. sees it—"you might say that Our Lord and I were childhood sweethearts." Sr. Mary Catharine considers herself "blessed to feel called by Our Lord to a life consecrated to Him since I was about five years old."

Her childhood, Sr. Mary Catharine recalled, was "filled with Sisters" the Poor Clares.

It was at the tender age of seven that the future nun became enthralled with a group of postulants. "I wanted so much to be with them. Every night I would go to sleep asking Our Lord to let me enter 'tomorrow'."

There were, Sr. Mary Catharine went on, "ten years of tomorrows." Three weeks after graduating from high school at the age of 18, she entered the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a small congregation that had been her teachers. After two years in the novitiate, however, "somehow it wasn't 'right' and I was very unhappy." Although she knew God was calling her, He "had other plans."

A visit to a teaching congregation of Dominican Sisters became the catalyst toward her contemplative vocation. "I became aware that the cloistered life of the novice year would only last one year and I wanted it for always. Where to find that...a cloistered monastery."

Still Sr. Mary Catharine wanted to teach. But "slowly I began to see that while I liked teaching, my deepest desire was to live a life of praise and adoration loving Christ alone and interceding for the salvation of souls."

Two years later she entered the monastery of the Dominican Nuns in Summit.

On Jan. 6, 1991, she found herself at the enclosure door. "As I passed over the threshold I knew that here is my resting place. I had found the place God had picked out for me for eternity where I could love and adore Him while flourishing in holiness and happiness."

How can I discern?

What can help me to discern?

- **Pray** — Silent Prayer and adoration
- **Read** and **study** Holy Scripture
- **Read** the lives of the Saints
- **Go** frequently to confession
- **Find** a Spiritual Director: "Seeking God's will with another"
- **Consecrate** yourself to Mary, model of all consecrations: "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5)
- **Visit** people and communities that are living the vocation you're attracted to



How can I cooperate?

- **Surrender** — the key to all vocations "Behold, I come to do your will, O God" (Heb.10: 7)
- **Free** your heart for God and ask Him to fashion your heart
- **Desire** — Listen to your deepest desires
- **Purity** — helps us to hear God's voice
- **Say "yes"** to God in small things, it will help you to say the big "YES" to your vocation
- **Take initiatives** — don't be too passive: "How can I please God?"
- **Go beyond** yourself — leave your comfort zones behind. We can only be happy if we give everything
- God does speak to us! **Open your eyes** for the signs He gives you
- **Look** at the effects of your choice — does this choice set my heart at peace?
- **Don't wait** until you're a 100% sure to make the next step: "Duc in altum" ("Put out into the deep" Lk 5: 4) Answering a call from God is an act of faith
- **"Do not be afraid"** "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid" (Matt. 14:27)



— *Pope Benedict XVI (St. Peter's Square, June 27, 2010)

Interested in knowing more?

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Called to Religious Life?

I have come to cast a fire upon the Earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?

(Lk 12:49)

A Special Call

Through the Sacrament of Baptism every Christian has a personal vocation- a call from God - to holiness and service. A call to Holiness means: an invitation to enter into an intimate relationship of love with God.



Marriage is like "an icon" that expresses in human terms what this intimate relationship is like. Saint Paul speaks about this in the letter to the Ephesians: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery – I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church. (Eph 5:31-32). The "Church" that is: "every Christian", who is a member of the Body of Christ. God's call is an invitation, an invitation that expects an answer from each baptized person. This call is lived out in different ways: by being married, ordained as a priest or deacon, or consecrated as a religious brother or sister.

The Holy Spirit urges all of us to answer the call, to enter into this relationship of love with God. The process you will follow to answer the fundamental question about what your particular way of living out this call will be, is called "discernment". This is a process that takes time. This vocation will be the particular way you live the universal call to holiness. Through prayer, conversation with others, study and reflection, you will be able to discover God's call for you.



Religious Life

"Come and follow me"
(Lk 18: 22)

A call to Religious life means following Jesus Christ with your whole heart and loving Him more than anyone or anything else.

There is no sacrament for Religious life. That is because the Church considers it to be a unique and fruitful deepening of the Consecration received in Baptism.

The "call" is to leave everything behind in order to enter into a deeper and closer relationship with Jesus. It is a special gift of the Holy Spirit. Responding the call to Religious life also means becoming more like Christ. Just as two friends, who spend most of their time with each other tend to develop similar habits and traits, so too by devoting



oneself to a powerful love-friendship with Christ, a Religious will become more like Him.

Deciding to devote one's life to Our Lord establishes a special intimacy with Him that demands total gift of self lived out through the evangelical counsels and vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Such an intense commitment helps the Religious to make Christ the whole meaning of his or her earthly existence.

By imitating Jesus' poverty, a Religious will show that, like Him, he or she received everything from the Father and gives everything back to the Father in love (Cf. Jn 17:7, 10) and that God is the only treasure in the life of a Religious.

Through the vow of chastity, a Religious imitates Jesus by keeping one's heart free and undivided only to love God. (Cf. Jn 17).

With the vow of obedience, a Religious accepts, like Jesus, to only search for the Will of the Father (Heb. 10:7).



A call to Religious Life is a call to follow Christ with your whole heart, of loving Him more than anyone else and moreover it's a call to become ever more conformed to Christ, ever more like Christ.

The profound love and gifts Religious receive from Christ inevitably are given to others. This unique love and its gifts are like a perfume that needs to be shared among all of God's children who are the brothers and sisters of those in religious life. The same holds true for contemplative and apostolic callings.

Each religious congregation has its own charism. It is the special way each Religious lives out his or her life. That charism is an important element of the mystery of Christ highlighted by the life of a Religious. Each charism is given by a founder under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is "translated" into the way in which Religious carry on in their daily lives.

A Vocation Story...

Born in Orange on Aug. 6, 1980, Brother Patrick Winbush, O.S.B. was raised in Newark. He began "seriously discerning" a vocation while a junior at Saint Patrick High School in Elizabeth.

Br. Winbush considers himself "fortunate" to have attended Catholic schools at the elementary through college levels. He converted to Catholicism while in the eighth grade.

He feels he was equally well served by the priests and Religious he had as teachers. "I thought they were great people and I wanted to be like them when I got older." Br. Winbush was particularly attracted to his teachers because of the dedication to their students.

Following his conversion, the future brother became a member of Blessed Sacrament/Saint Charles Borromeo Parish in Newark. He was an altar server and eventually became the head altar server.

His first contact with the Benedictine Monks was through Father Edwin Leahy who was the weekend assistant at his parish. Eventually he was invited to take a tour of the Monastery of Newark Abbey and "fell in love" with it.

At the end of his freshman year at Saint Peter's College in Jersey City, Br. Winbush entered the monastery as a postulant. On July 10, 2000, he entered the novitiate and took the name "Patrick." It was the name of his grade school principal, Brother Patrick Byrne.

Br. Winbush looks back on his time in formation as a "retreat year." On July 11, 2001 he professed his first vows. "It was a great day for me surrounded by family and friends."

As a junior monk he worked at "many jobs" at Saint Benedict's Prep. "The greatest joy to this day is to be able to work with my students hands-on."

For a year and a half, Br. Winbush was at the motherhouse, Saint Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, PA. While there he took several classes in the college and seminary while continuing his monastic function.

Returning to Newark, he professed solemn vows on Sept. 24, 2005. "God has been good to me and He will continue to show me the way to Him." Upon entering a monastery, Br. Winbush explained, a monk's purpose is to seek God. "I pray that there are men and women who are looking to seek God in religious life or the priesthood. Take the next step and say 'yes' as I did." Citing the prologue of the Rule of Saint Benedict, he concluded, "Listen with the ear of your heart."

