

CELEBRATE VOCATION

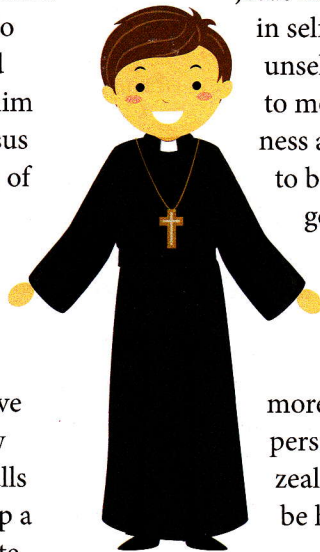
A call that invites response

BY SR. PATRICIA M. MCCORMACK, IHM, EdD

POPE FRANCIS FREQUENTLY SPEAKS of *vocation*, the act of being called by God to relationship with him. Vocation is God's free gift, a grace, and a share in God's life. God's love invites a free response.


God created us “to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world and to be happy with him forever in the next.” Jesus explained that the core of our call is to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (see Matthew 22:36–40). Vocation calls every person to develop a lifelong, age-appropriate prayer life, to learn and love Scripture, and to practice both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy as well as the principles of Catholic social teaching. When we live true to the purpose of our creation, we grow in holiness. Additionally, contentment and satisfaction follow our efforts to live a yes-response to God's call.

We live out our vocation within the context of one of four states in life (married, single, priest, religious); therefore, the term “vocation” also refers to our specific mode of life. **Marriage** calls spouses to find and to serve



Jesus in each other; to grow in self-awareness and unselfishness; to learn how to model Jesus' forgiveness and compassion; and to be the herald of the gospel to their children. **Single life** calls forth generosity of time and talent to serve humankind more radically. It frees the person to imitate Jesus' zeal and availability and to be his love and proactive

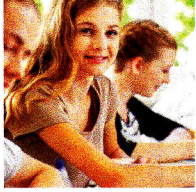
presence in society. The call to **priesthood** sets a man apart to make available God's presence in word and sacrament and, by holiness of life and outreach, to lead people to God. **Religious life** calls men and women to consecrate their lives and their gifts of nature and grace to the total service of God and God's people. Religious profess voluntary vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. With other sisters or brothers, they live a common life of prayer and work. Often distinct clothing or symbols identify them as members of a particular community.

Service in God's name characterizes each of the four lifestyles. Parents, teachers, catechists, and the faithful witness of others tutor us in understanding, appreciating, and learning ways to live our vocation more fully. Whatever the vocation, know that “God's love does not call where God's grace cannot keep! ... If God calls you to it, God will see you through it.” 

SR. PATRICIA MCCORMACK, IHM, EdD, is an international consultant and public speaker on issues of whole-person formation.

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RELIGIOUS LIFE 101

What is the consecrated life all about?

BY SR. PATRICIA M. MCCORMACK, IHM, EdD

WHILE I WAS SUBSTITUTE TEACHING in a Catholic high school, an 11th-grade student asked me, “Are you a real nun?”

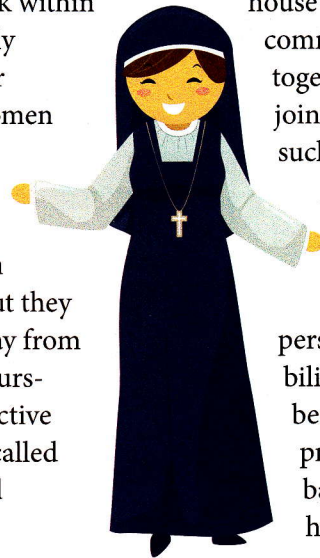
I replied that I was probably as real as they get! The student was stunned, stammering, “I’ve never met a nun.” As we talked, I tried to put religious life into a context she would understand. I asked her to compare or contrast the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines. She correctly discerned that they were all forms of military service which differed in customs, dress, regulations, and so on. Just so, though there are identifiable differences among religious communities, the lifestyle of consecrated men and woman is basically the same.

1. Men and women religious consecrate themselves to God by professing three vows. In some congregations a fourth vow is added, often stability or service. Cloistered religious and members of orders such as Carmelites and Benedictines take solemn vows; members cannot own property or receive an inheritance. Active religious take simple vows and may own property or receive an inheritance, but they give up the right to use it.

2. Common vows include chastity (single-hearted love of God that excludes sexual relationships), poverty (a simple lifestyle where resources are shared and gifts or possessions are contributed to the common good), and obedience (accepting the decisions of the Superior as the will of God).

3. Cloistered, contemplative religious live and work within a monastery and rarely leave it. Prayer is their primary ministry. Women contemplatives are called nuns; men are called monks. Active religious live in a convent or friary, but they perform ministry away from it, such as teaching, nursing, or social work. Active women religious are called sisters; men are called brothers.

4. Religious formation takes a minimum of eight years, and ongoing formation extends throughout the lifetime of a consecrated person. Pre-entrance time varies by person and congregation. Postulancy (one year), Novitiate (two years), and Temporary Vows (five years) precede Final (Perpetual) Profession. A man or woman may leave at any time during formation. A dispensation from Rome is required in order to leave after Final Profession.



5. Members within a religious house meet in a chapel for common prayer, eat meals together, relax together, and join in recreation activities such as watching TV or going to an out-of-house activity or event. They have periods of silence and personal prayer responsibilities. Each has a private bedroom, though they probably share a common bathroom. They share household chores and coordinate the use of a common car.

6. Often distinct clothing or religious symbols identify men and women religious as consecrated members of a particular community.

Religious life calls men and women to dedicate their lives to serving God. **T**

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Are you interested in learning more?

Explore CloisteredLife.com, CMSWR.org, ImagineSisters.org and VocationNetwork.org.