



RELIGIOUS LIFE

“More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ...forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.”

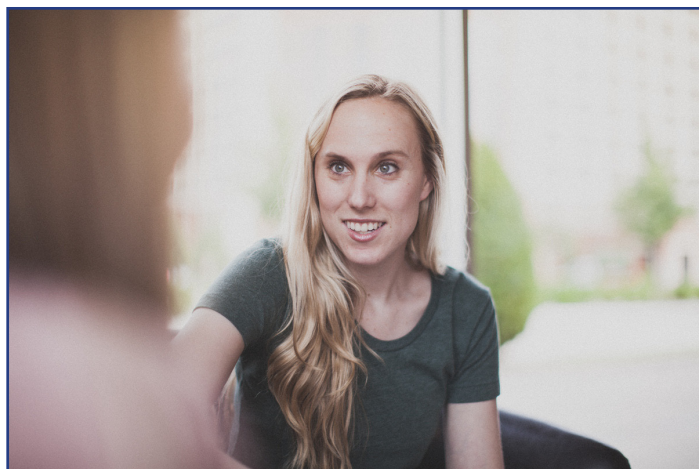
- PHILIPPIANS 3:8, 11-14 ^[1]

CLASS DISCUSSION: PREPARING TO TALK WITH OTHERS ABOUT A RELIGIOUS VOCATION

Imagine that you feel called to the Religious Life. Now imagine that you need to tell your parents about it. How would you prepare?

STEP 1: INITIAL CONVERSATIONS

- Before announcing your intention to pursue a vocation to the religious life, seek conversations with your parents about the religious life in general.
- If you do not know how they feel about the Catholic Church, ask them about it. If you do not know how they feel about the general idea of the religious life, find out.
- See how they react, rather than simply assuming there will be a problem. You might be pleasantly surprised by their reactions, especially if they have a high regard for the Church and the religious life.
- If they seem put off by the idea of the religious life, stay calm and affectionate—it’s your family!—and ask them why they feel that way. It will be more beneficial to your relationship in the long run if you are calm and loving rather than reacting with indignation. Even if their responses are very negative, they are more likely to come around if you don’t allow yourself to be disturbed by their reactions.
- If you have been in contact with a particular order, ask the vocation director for advice on how to talk to your family. Otherwise, talk to another trusted and knowledgeable adult.



Remain calm when talking to your family, even if they may not agree or understand at first.

STEP 2: BREAK THE NEWS, GENTLY

Hopefully, you have been able to follow Step 1, talking with your family and friends multiple times about the general idea of religious life. If it has been too hard to talk about your personal interest, don’t worry. You have to tell them sometime, and here is how to break the news in the best way possible.

- As you begin the conversation, especially if you have never mentioned the possibility of this vocation, do some damage control. Apologize for the fact that you never brought it up before, and tell them that you love them. You don’t need to give reasons why you never mentioned the topic.

[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible>



CLASS DISCUSSION: PREPARING TO TALK WITH OTHERS ABOUT A RELIGIOUS VOCATION

- During the conversation, tell them very simply that you want to enter religious life. Tell what attracted you to it, and demonstrate that you understand its challenges as well as its joys. If this is the first conversation, and you expect resistance, you do not need to mention how firmly you have made up your mind.
- Offer practical ways for everyone to get more information about your desire. You have to plan ahead for this:
 - Have the order's web address and any other materials they may have available, such as brochures about the community.
 - If the order is an active order, find out whether one of the members could visit your family. See if your family would like to invite some of the religious over to the house.
 - Take your family to visit the order if possible. See if family can talk to the order's vocation director.
 - Invite them to attend a temporary or final profession Mass for any religious order with you, especially if it's possible to attend one of the order you are considering, or show your family and friends a video of one of these events.
- If any "downsides" to the vocation are brought up, acknowledge that you are aware of the and challenges of this vocation. If pressed for more information, address any particular concerns the others might bring up. If it seems like the discussion is turning into an argument, it might be good to back down a bit and suggest pursuing one of the practical steps suggested above. Try to end conversations by expressing your love and concern for family and friends.

ROLEPLAY: TALKING TO OTHERS ABOUT A RELIGIOUS VOCATION

In this exercise, you will role-play a conversation between parents and their child who is interested in becoming a religious sister or brother.

To prepare, you may want to refer to the "Tough Topics" pages:

- Contemplatives – Hiding from the World?
- Why Enclosure?
- Critics of Mother Teresa

GROUPS OF 4

One girl to play mom, one guy to play dad, one girl/guy to play "potential religious," and 4th guy/girl to play coach.

The "potential religious" tells "parents" about his/her plan to pursue a religious vocation. The "parents" play Devil's Advocate and ask questions or express concerns to the "potential religious." The "potential religious" practices answering and addressing these concerns. The 4th student coaches the "potential religious" if he/she is having trouble explaining or answering questions. If the group finishes early, you can switch roles.

GROUPS OF 2

One student plays parent/friend and the other plays "potential religious."

The parent/friend plays Devil's Advocate and asks questions or expresses concerns to the "potential religious." The "potential religious" practices answering and addressing these concerns. If time allows, you can switch roles.

OPTIONAL: PRACTICE ENCOURAGEMENT

One girl/guy to play friend or sibling; one girl/guy to play "potential religious."

The "potential religious" tells his/her plan to the friend. The friend practices practices how he/she will respond. You can offer congratulations or encouragement, or ask questions. If time allows, you can switch roles.



ROLEPLAY: THE RITE OF PERPETUAL PROFESSION

RITE OF PROFESSION (PASSIONIST SISTERS)

Calling of the Candidates

Narrator: *The Rite of Profession takes place in the context of Mass. After the Gospel has been proclaimed, those to be professed go and stand before the Celebrant. Then the Celebrant begins by calling the religious names of the sisters to be professed. As each is called, she responds:*

Sisters: Lord, you have called me. Here I am.

Narrator: *When all have been called, the celebrant questions all sisters together:*

Celebrant: My dear Sister, what do you ask of God and of His holy Church?

Sisters: I ask to follow Christ as my Spouse in the Congregation of the Nuns of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to persevere in this intention all the days of my life.

All: Thanks be to God.

Narrator: *Then those to be professed return to their place and all are seated. A homily follows.*

Examination of Candidates

Narrator: *After the homily, the sisters to be professed stand before the Celebrant. The Celebrant asks:*

Celebrant: Dear Sisters, in baptism you have already died to sin, and have been set aside for God's service. Are you now resolved to unite yourself more closely to God by the bond of perpetual profession?

Sisters: I am so resolved.

Celebrant: As brides of Jesus Crucified, are you resolved to commit yourselves perpetually to that life of perfect chastity, obedience and poverty chosen by Christ our Lord and His Virgin Mother?

Sisters: I am.

Celebrant: Are you resolved to commit yourself to follow the Gospel, to cherish in your heart a grateful remembrance of the Passion of Jesus and to promote it in others, to observe the rule of your community and to strive constantly for perfect love of God and neighbor?

Sisters: I am so resolved.

Celebrant: Are you resolved to live for God alone in solitude and silence, in persevering prayer and willing penance, in humble work and holiness of life?

Sisters: I am.

Celebrant: May God who has begun this good work in you see to its completion and perfection for the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Prayer for Those Sisters Who Are To Be Professed

Narrator: *The Celebrant stands facing the people, and with hands joined says:*

Celebrant: Dear friends in Christ, let us pray to God the Father who gives us everything that is good. In His mercy, may He strengthen His servants in the purpose He has inspired in them.



Passionist sisters are covered by a pall, symbolizing their death to the world and rebirth in Christ.

Photo from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/53119790@N02/>

[3] Alice von Hildebrand, *By Love Refined: Letters to a Young Bride*, (Manchester, NH: Sophia Press, 1989, 12).



ROLE-PLAY: THE ORDINATION RITE

Litany of the Saints

Narrator: *All kneel. During the Litany of the Saints, the sisters to be professed lie down full length or prostrate before the altar, and are covered with a funeral pall, the symbol of dying to themselves that each may rise as new person in Christ. In this ancient ritual, there is rich Paschal symbolism of death and resurrection. When the pall is removed, the religious “rises up” to pronounce her religious vows, an intense participation in the covenant of baptism.*

All: Lord, have mercy...Christ, have mercy...Lord, have mercy...

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us...

St. Michael, pray for us...

St. Gabriel, pray for us...

St. John the Baptist, pray for us...

St. Peter, pray for us...

St. Paul, pray for us...

St. Joseph, pray for us...

St. Dominic, pray for us...

St. Ann, pray for us...

St. Mary Magdalen, pray for us...

St. Cecilia, pray for us...

All holy men and women of God, pray for us...

Lord, be merciful, Lord save your people...

From all evil, Lord save your people...

Christ, hear us, Christ, graciously hear us...

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.

Narrator: *At the end of the litany, the pall is removed. The sisters to be professed stand. All others sit.*

Religious Profession

Narrator: The celebrant alone rises and says, with hands joined:

Celebrant: Lord, grant the prayers of Your people. Prepare the heart of Your servants for consecration to Your service. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, purify them from all sin and set them on fire with Your love. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

Narrator: *The sisters to be professed then pronounce the words of profession according to the following formula:*



A Salesian sister signs her name to the formula of the vows after professing them before her community.

Used with permission from the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco - www.salesian-sisters.org

Sisters: To the honor of God, I, Sister [name], firmly resolve to consecrate myself more intimately to Him and to follow Christ more closely. In the presence of the community of this Monastery of [Name], a part of the Institute of the Religious of the Passion of Jesus and a sign of the universal Church, and in your hands, Reverend Mother [Name], I vow to promote devotion to and grateful remembrance of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, and to express it in my style of life. I also vow chastity, poverty, obedience, and to live in enclosure perpetually, according to the Rule and Constitutions of the Religious of the Passion of Jesus Christ. I promise to lead a life of love, together with you, my Sisters, “called within the Church to be a sign of the love of Jesus Crucified for the Father and for mankind.” May the grace of the Holy Spirit, the intercession of the Sorrowful Virgin Mary and of St. Paul of the Cross, and your charity, my Sisters, sustain my weakness, and strengthen me in what I have promised by vow. Help Your servant, Lord. With trust in the word of Your Gospel, she has given You her faith.

Female Superior: By the authority entrusted to me, I accept your vows in the name of the Church for the Institute of the Religious of the Passion of Jesus Christ. I commend you earnestly to God that you may fulfill your dedication which is linked with this Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Narrator: *The newly professed Sisters then go to the altar for the signing of the profession formula, which is left on the altar for the remainder of the Mass.*



ROLE-PLAY: THE ORDINATION RITE



Dominican Friars lie prostrate as they seek their final profession.

Photo from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dominicanfriars/>

RITE OF PROFESSION (DOMINICAN BROTHERS)

Calling

Narrator: *After the Gospel has been proclaimed, those to be professed go before the Prior, where they prostrate themselves. Then the Prior questions those to be professed, saying:*

Prior: What do you seek?

Brothers: God's mercy and yours.

Prior: Brothers, arise.

Narrator: *Then those to be professed return to their places and all are seated for the Homily.*

Examination

Narrator: *After the homily, the Prior turns to those to be professed and asks:*

Prior: Are you resolved to make solemn profession according to the Constitutions of the Order of Preachers?

Narrator: *Those to be professed rise and together respond:*

Brothers: I am, with God's help and yours.

Prior: May the Lord who has begun this good work, bring it to completion.

All: Amen.

Prayer for Those Brothers Who Are To Be Professed

Narrator: *All rise for prayer. The priest stands, with hands joined in front of him, and turning to the people, says:*

Prior: My dear brothers,
let us pray to God the Father almighty,
that he may pour out the grace of his blessing on these servants,
whom he has called to follow Christ perfectly.
In His kindness, may he confirm them in their holy intention.

Litany of the Saints

Narrator: *All kneel.*

All: Lord, have mercy... Christ, have mercy... Lord, have mercy...
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us...
St. Michael, pray for us...
St. Gabriel, pray for us...
St. John the Baptist, pray for us...
St. Peter, pray for us...
St. Paul, pray for us...
St. Joseph, pray for us...
St. Dominic, pray for us...
St. Ann, pray for us...
St. Mary Magdalen, pray for us...
St. Cecilia, pray for us...
All holy men and women of God, pray for us...
Lord, be merciful, Lord save your people...
From all evil, Lord save your people...
Christ, hear us, Christ, graciously hear us...
Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.



ROLE-PLAY: THE ORDINATION RITE

Religious Profession

Narrator: *All sit. Each of those to be professed kneels in turn before the Prior, who is seated, and places his hands into the hands of the Prior. The brother to be professed then pronounces the words of profession in an audible voice according to the following formula, which is proper to the Order.*

Brothers (each in turn): I, brother N.N., make profession and promise obedience to God,
to blessed Mary, to blessed Dominic,
and to you, Master of the Order of Friars Preachers
and to your successors
according to the rule of blessed Augustine
and the Constitutions of the Friars Preachers
that I will be obedient to you and to your successors,
until death.

Narrator: *Once profession has been made, the Prior receives the brothers who have made profession to the kiss of peace — a sign of reception into the Order — by which the bond of obedience and communion is signified. Then the Prior advises the newly professed:*

Prior: Dearest brothers, by this solemn profession you have handed yourselves over to God and his will: therefore through the ministry of the Church God has consecrated you to himself.



The religious places his hands between the hands of his superior during his profession of vows.

Photo from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dominicanfriars/>

HOMEWORK

Write a letter to the Founder or Superior of an order you are somewhat interested in, asking every question you have about the religious life, including particular questions about the order you chose. If the Founder has been canonized, ask for help discerning your own vocation. Your letter may include personal questions or questions you have heard from other people. Feel free to ask anything.

While this letter will not be mailed, write as if you were really writing to the Founder or Superior.