



# RELIGIOUS LIFE

“Put out into deep water, and lower your nets for a catch.” - LUKE 5:4

## OPENING ACTIVITY

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “DEEP?”

People who are called to the religious life usually have depth of character, which continues to be formed through their vocation.

When someone says, “That’s really deep,” what do they mean? Normally they mean that something is profound or insightful.

Do you know any people who are “deep.” Have you read any deep books or watched any profound movies?



*Aristotle was a Greek philosopher who lived about 350 years before Jesus. Even today, he is considered one of the greatest thinkers of all time.*

## ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

### EDITH STEIN BECOMES TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

Edith Stein was born in 1891 in Breslau, Poland, to a Jewish family.

Her father died when she was a toddler, and she was raised by her very intelligent and capable mother.

Gifted with a brilliant mind, Edith actively sought the truth through extended philosophical studies. Eventually, she found the Truth himself when she encountered Jesus through reading the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila. She was baptized soon thereafter in Germany when she was 31.

She taught, wrote, and studied philosophy with great zeal, though she longed to offer herself to God as a Carmelite nun. Much of her writing focused on philosophy and women’s distinct role. She was a pioneer in many regards. Eventually, she became a Carmelite sister and took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Only a few years later, as the Nazi influence became more threatening to her Jewish roots, she secretly left Germany and fled to a Carmelite Monastery in Holland.

The Nazis invaded Holland and expelled all Catholics of Jewish background, including Teresa Benedicta who was put to death in the gas chambers at Auschwitz on August 9, 1942. Her writings and her prayerful love for people in the midst of her sufferings became widely contemplated. She was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1998.



*Edith Stein as a young woman*



## ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS *continued*

### Step in Her Shoes

The following are quotes by Edith Stein. As a philosopher, many of her writings take time to understand, but they show the fruit of prayerful contemplation.

1. Read through the quotes.
2. Pick one.
3. Rewrite it in your own words.
4. Find an application in your life or in the world around you.
5. Repeat, depending upon time available.

### Quotes from St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross

1. "In order to be an image of God, the spirit must turn to what is eternal, hold it in spirit, keep it in memory, and by loving it, embrace it in the will."
2. "The limitless loving devotion to God, and the gift God makes of Himself to you, are the highest elevation of which the heart is capable; it is the highest degree of prayer. The souls that have reached this point are truly the heart of the Church."
3. "Those who join the Carmelite Order are not lost to their near and dear ones, but have been won for them, because it is our vocation to intercede to God for everyone."
4. "Let go of your plans. The first hour of your morning belongs to God. Tackle the day's work that he charges you with, and he will give you the power to accomplish it."
5. "Each woman who lives in the light of eternity can fulfill her vocation, no matter if it is in marriage, in a religious order, or in a worldly profession."



*St Theresa Benedicta of the Cross*

## ALTERNATIVE READING

### THE VOCATION STORY OF SISTER LUCIA MARIE

*From the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia*

I began to explore the idea of a religious vocation even before I became Catholic. For some reason I bought an old novel about a nursing sister and began reading it my junior year of college at St. John's University in Annapolis. This is the first time I heard a sister being called a "Bride of Christ." The idea consumed my thoughts; it was so beautiful. In the book, the main character endured many hardships for the love of God and the desire to become holy. That anyone would willingly endure these hardships for Him showed me the importance and happiness that comes from holiness. I tried to find more books about sisters and began to read the lives of the saints.



*A monstrance stands in the chapel of St. John's Seminary in Boston. A new papal document released Oct. 8 says devotion to the Eucharist can help transform the world.*

*(CNS photo by Gregory L. Tracy, The Pilot) (Oct. 8, 2004) See EUCHARIST-LETTER Oct. 8, 2004.*

At this time I also began to visit a Perpetual Adoration chapel at the church a few blocks from my apartment. I remember going in and seeing the Host in the monstrance for the first time. I genuflected because that was what everyone else was doing, but I had no idea why. I sat down and looked at the Host. It was so white, I thought that maybe it was a relic of the habit of a saint, but then I realized that I was looking at the Host, and thought, "Catholics think that is Jesus." Then I realized, "It is Jesus!" I suppose that was the real moment of my conversion.

That tiny basement chapel is also where my desire to be a bride of Christ became tangible. On the left wall hung a large crucifix. One day during Holy Week, a woman was standing by the crucifix, crying and kissing Our Lord's wounds. A real Mary Magdalene before my eyes! I was filled with the desire to be poured out for the love of Christ, to share in His sufferings and take pleasure in His joys. Shortly after this I read an essay by Edith Stein in which she said that once a person hears the call of God to be His bride, nothing else can satisfy her.



## ALTERNATIVE READING *continued*

I entered the Church the following Easter. During that year, I explored religious life very seriously. My RCIA sponsor was a Carmelite nun. I went to daily Mass at the Carmelite Monastery near my school. After graduation, my desire for holiness did not wane, but I put thoughts of a vocation aside for the time being.

I moved to Alexandria, Virginia, and began teaching second grade. I had a very fine spiritual director who encouraged me to strengthen my prayer life. He was a Dominican Tertiary...

I began to pray even more, making a holy hour each day. I felt that God wanted me to be in St. Catherine's order. It is funny now to remember coming home from the January vocation retreat to the Diocese of Arlington and telling the priest at my parish, "I want to be a Dominican, but I am not sure where!" I had a hundred concerns about looking in the direction of Nashville. I was quieter than most of the sisters I had met, and I wasn't sure that I wanted to teach. But the more I prayed the more I felt that God was calling me south. I made a retreat at the Motherhouse and saw my attraction for the life expanding. I then returned a month later, this time convinced that this was where I belonged. I was accepted on Palm Sunday and spent the spring and summer in happy anticipation.



*Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia* <http://nashvilledominican.org>

Now that I am here, I realize that not only is the life different from what I expected, but it has actually exceeded my expectations. When I was looking at different communities, I paid attention to their daily schedule, prayer life, and apostolate. While these are all important factors, I have come to realize how important community life is. It is from the example of the other sisters that I learn to be more and more like Our Lady. With my sisters I am learning to see and serve Christ. The reason I am so happy is not because I live in such pleasant surroundings or have access to a pretty chapel with beautiful music, or even that I am taken up by the joy of the sisters. It is because I am learning every day to love more and to see the world from the perspective of heaven. Growing in virtue and coming closer to the Lord is my true joy.

*Sister Lucia Marie professed her first vows on August 10, 2005*

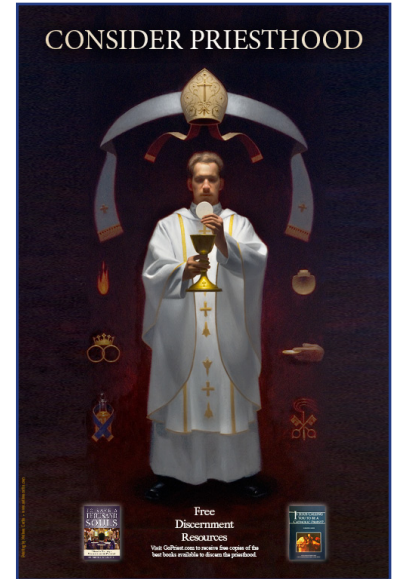
## EXPLORATION

### HELP WANTED: RELIGIOUS MEN OR WOMEN

More religious men and women are needed in the Church! Pretend that a Religious Order has hired you for your marketing skills, so you can attract people to consider joining their order.

**Girls:** Write and design the "help wanted" ad for a women's religious order.

**Boys:** Write and design the "help wanted" ad for a men's religious order.



Include a detailed explanation of who is needed and what they will be doing. If needed, research some particular religious orders.



## REFLECTIVE PRAYER

### PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP



#### *The Sea of Galilee*

*“While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.*

*He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.*

*Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.*

*After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”*

*Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.”*

*When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.*

*They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.*

*When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”*

*For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”*

*When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.”*

#### **Points to Ponder**

After reading Luke 5:1-11, answer these questions:

1. What is it like to be there in the boat?
2. What do your senses teach you?
3. What words of Christ’s resound in your heart?
4. If Jesus called you, would you leave everything to follow him as a brother or sister?

## VOCAL PRAYER

### *Come, Holy Spirit*

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts  
of your faithful and kindle in  
them the fire of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and they  
shall be created. And You shall  
renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the  
Holy Spirit, did instruct the  
hearts of the faithful,  
grant that by the same  
Holy Spirit we may be truly wise  
and ever enjoy His consolations,  
Through Christ Our Lord,  
AMEN.