



Answering the Master's Call

Vocation Stories

Surprised by the Call

By Sr. Mary Thomas Michalek, O.P.

You, a nun? Never!" Such was my Dad's reaction when I told him that I wanted to be a nun. He was sitting in the living room reading the paper while my mother was putting the finishing touches on our evening meal. In retrospect, I guess he had good reason to believe it would never happen. I had been anything but pious, but rather a somewhat rebellious and carefree teen out to have a good time with her friends. What brought about the change within me is rather interesting.

As a student in a public high school in Detroit, I was taken aback when my English teacher, Miss Ruth Brady, known for her sternness and high standards, asked me to stay after class and meet her in her office. When we met, she asked, "Would you be interested in attending a Weekend Retreat for Catholic girls who attend public high school?" On my own I would never have thought of doing such thing. But for the sheer novelty of it, I said, "yes" and that was the beginning of my journey to the cloister!

The weekend retreat was held at the Convent of Mary Repa-



ratrix where I dutifully made a good confession and shared with the Retreat Master my current plans to get married soon after graduation and have a big family. His encouragement sent me home in peace.

However, when I returned home, a feeling of uneasiness, which I couldn't explain, settled into in my heart. So, the next day, after classes, I asked Miss Brady if she had time to see me. When we met, the first thing she asked was how I liked

the retreat. I told her I felt confused and mixed-up. Her very unexpected answer was: "Have you ever thought of becoming a nun?" Taken aback, I responded, "Not since I was a little girl." Reaching into her desk drawer, she brought out a large directory of all the religious communities in the United States, while telling me about the Detroit Monastery of Cloistered Dominican Nuns not too far from where I lived.

I had never heard of a "cloistered nun," let alone about the

Dominican ones. Miss Brady said, "Take the book home and read it." So, I did and every time I randomly opened up that book, it opened to the Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Detroit, Michigan. And every time that happened, I slammed it shut! No, I would never consider being "cloistered," withdrawn from the world. Period. End of story...or so I thought.

When I brought the directory back, Miss Brady casually asked: "Frances, why don't you go and visit the nuns I told you about? I'll make an appointment for you." I was so stunned that I agreed. A few days later I asked my "boyfriend" to drive me to the Monastery. Not a Catholic, I doubt he even knew what a monastery was, but he consented. Dressed in my Sunday best, I rang the doorbell of the monastery and was ushered into the visiting parlor, where (remember, this was before Vatican II), I came face to face with double iron grilles and a heavy black curtain that was drawn back for visitors. After a few minutes, the novice mistress and the prioress appeared. After timely introductions, they asked me a slew of questions which I politely answered. Then I left, finding my loyal boyfriend, curious but patient, waiting outside.

Many months later, the two superiors told me that they didn't think I'd be back because I was too worldly! However, I did return, this time with my mother for Sunday Rosary and Benediction.

When we opened the door to the public chapel and saw the magnificent white marble stairs



leading to the beautiful niche with the Blessed Sacrament exposed for Adoration, I was dumbstruck with awe and reverence. Instinctively I fell to my knees and adored Jesus, really present. At that moment and in that action, I knew; this was where I belonged. Internally, I surrendered my life to God and by His grace and mercy, have never taken it back. My heart was captivated and captured to be His forever.

Subsequently, I had the difficult task of informing my family and friends, ending the relationship with my boyfriend and declining the training linked to a job offer. This was a difficult and sometimes heart-wrenching time for me. However, I did everything one step at a time and I have never regretted my decision to ask for admission.

In September, following my graduation from high school, I

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entered the monastery as a postulant. That was it. No agonizing months of discernment, no doubt as to my fitness. I simply followed my heart and its deepest instincts that said: "This is where the Lord is calling you and nothing else matters—Go!"

As soon as I entered I was met with peace that I knew would never leave me and it never has. Little by little, I learned about the Dominican charism and the four pillars which support it: prayer, study, community and preaching. Sometimes people ask, how do you preach—you are cloistered! Our very existence as cloistered nuns is a preaching. Our lives give witness that God exists and that He is enough. Our presence calls others to pray and trust that He hears not only our prayers but theirs as well.

Have I ever regretted entering? Not for a moment. Have there been difficult times? Of course there have, as there are in every life and in every vocation. God is faithful and it is He who leads us, sustains us and continues to enthrall us all the days of our lives.

To Him be honor and glory and praise! ☩

Postscript: Sister Mary Thomas entered the "old" Monastery in Detroit, Michigan. In 1966, the community re-located to Farmington Hills.



- ReligiousLife.com
- CloisteredLife.com
- ReligiousBrotherhood.com
- VocationBlog.com
- SpeakLord.net