

Exploring Religious Life

One of my experiences of “crossing borders” was my exploration into religious life. I’d grown up thinking I’d get married and have children, as most of my siblings had done. While I knew religious life was an option – my oldest sister is a woman religious – I felt I had considered that when I was younger, and it wasn’t in my plans. However, a few years ago, God had something special in store for me.

I began to feel a nudge to explore religious life more seriously. I wasn’t sure what I was feeling at first. I struggled with the idea of not getting married and prayed that God would lessen that desire if my vocation was religious life. I felt God’s support and started talking to vocation directors and looking seriously at three different communities – two apostolic and one monastic.

After spending time with each community, I began to feel that nudge again. When I was with one community, I felt God was saying, “jump in.” So I became an affiliate with the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). The experience of being an affiliate is one I wouldn’t trade for anything. The congregation welcomed me with open arms. I was able to meet with the vocation director whenever I needed to talk about where I felt God was calling me. I was matched with a local community – a household of sisters – with whom I prayed and shared meals, and who supported me on this journey.

I grew deeper in my spirituality and my relationship with God. Mostly, I learned about myself. I learned about my hunger for God and the need to nurture my spirituality. I learned about the gifts God has given me and that I am called to use in serving God’s people. And I learned that I was called not to religious life, but to marriage.



It was through this process of being open and trusting God to lead me that I discovered that God wanted most of all for me to lead a holy, whole, and joy-filled life.



I then struggled, because I knew if I left the formation process, I would miss the faith sharing and prayer that went with it. Also, I didn’t want to hurt the sisters. However, I found the sisters supported me in my decision to leave. Their desire was for me to find what God was calling me to – my true vocation.

I would never trade my experience exploring religious life. It was through this process of being open and trusting God to lead me that I discovered that God wanted most of all for me to lead a holy, whole, and joy-filled life. In this process, God taught me that I have many gifts to offer a husband and family. I grew to know myself better, so I can give myself more fully to family, ministry, whatever I undertake. And I realized how important it would be for me to incorporate and deepen my spirituality in my family life.

I’m happily married with a one-year-old daughter. My husband and daughter are the joy of my life and God continues to teach me through them. I find God in the love of my husband. I see God in the eyes of my little girl. I know I am a better wife and mother because I dared open myself to truly seeking God’s will. I continue to seek it as I live my life each day.

Thank you to SSND, the vocation ministers, and other sisters who supported me. Thank you to God for nudging me and giving me the strength to act on that nudge. It’s a blessing to know that marriage is not just something I wanted, but was actually called to by God.

– Karen Heuberger