

# Learn to Discern

## Discernment

The word “discernment” comes from the Latin word *discernere*, which means “to separate.” When a woman is discerning, she is taking time apart in order to pray, think, reflect, and discover the unique plan God has for her life.

## A Call of Love

Committing to regular prayer and a rich sacramental life is essential for discernment. Daily Mass, frequent confession, and prayer in silence and with the Scriptures can all help you to listen to God’s call. In addition, spiritual direction can help guide you in the process.



# For Reflection

## Questions for Prayer & Meditation

What are my gifts, strengths, and challenges?

What do I enjoy doing with my time, and why?

Can I see myself living a particular vocation?

What brings me joy?

**Pray for the desire to know  
His plan and the courage to follow it!**

## Further Reading

*Discerning Religious Life*  
by Mother Clare Matthias, CFR

*Discerning the Will of God*  
by Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV



A DISCERNMENT GUIDE  
FOR CATHOLIC WOMEN

# My Vocation

## A Response to a Call

God calls each of us into existence as a unique and unrepeatable creation. In His love, He desires to enter into communion with us and for this end He gives each of us a specific vocation.

## A Call of Love

Your vocation is the particular way that God made you to love Him and those around you. Whether you are called to marriage or consecrated life, your vocation is an invitation to give of yourself in love and service. By faithfully responding to this call, we become the saints God wants us to become.

## You and Fulfillment

Living your vocation in our fallen world is nothing less than heroic. By giving of ourselves daily, which often requires great sacrifice, we find true joy and fulfillment in this earthly life and eternal life with God in the next.



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# Consecrated Life

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

### Poverty, Chastity, Obedience

Through a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience, a religious sister or nun is a witness of the life of heaven here on earth.

### Spouse of Christ

A consecrated woman is completely and exclusively devoted to Christ, her Spouse, and points to the supremacy of Christ in our lives.

### Community and Charisms

Living in community, women religious witness to a life of communion with Christ, the Church, and one another. Each religious institute is blessed with a charism, or the particular expression of the way they are called to follow Christ, represented in their mission, community life, and culture.

### Apostolic Religious Life

Those in apostolic religious life devote themselves to the outward service of the Church by teaching, working in hospitals, performing parish ministry, and serving the poor.

### Contemplative Life

Contemplative and cloistered women religious bear witness in a special way to the Church's love for the Lord, contributing with hidden apostolic fruitfulness to the growth of the people of God through vows of enclosure or stability.

### Eremitic Life

A hermit can belong to a religious community or live directly under the authority of a local bishop. Hermits do not always publicly profess poverty, chastity and obedience.

## CONSECRATED VIRGINS

### Spouse of Christ Living in the World

Consecrated Virgins embody the image of the heavenly Bride and the life that is to come. Consecrated to God by her diocesan bishop, a consecrated virgin is mystically betrothed to Christ and dedicated to the service of the Church in her diocese. She lives in the world in prayer, penance, service of her brethren, and apostolic activity, according to the spiritual gifts God has given her.

## SECULAR INSTITUTES

### Leaven in the World

Men and women in secular institutes live out their profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience in secular society. They strive to transfigure the world from within and help to ensure the presence of the Church in society. Most members of secular institutes live alone or with their families, though some have common houses.

## SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

### Constitutions and Common Life

Also called societies of common life, these groups are distinguished by the specific nature of their consecration according to the constitutions of their community. They live in community and pursue a specific apostolic or missionary end.



*“The history of every...  
Christian vocation is the history  
of an inexpressible dialogue  
between God and human beings,  
between the love of God who  
calls and the freedom of  
individuals who respond  
lovingly to him.”*

–Pastores dabo vobis

# Married Life

## HOLY MATRIMONY

### A Sacrament

The bond between husband and wife is a visible sign of the sacrificial love of Christ for his Church. Through the sacrament of marriage, God gives spouses the grace they need to love each other generously, in imitation of Christ.

### A Shared Journey to Heaven

When a couple gets married, they promise to God and to each other to do everything they can to get their spouse to heaven. Spouses try to love each other perfectly, relying on the grace of God in the sacrament of matrimony to make up for their lack.

### An Image of Trinitarian Love

At the heart of married love is the total gift of self that spouses freely offer to each other. In conjugal love, husband and wife truly become “one flesh” and co-creators with God. Children are a living reflection of the love between their parents.

