



Photo courtesy of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Sister Karen Grochowski goes for a walk with a student in La Crosse, Wisconsin from Chileda, a center which offers treatment for adults and children with severe mental disabilities.

## Young woman finds the work of religious life rewarding

**Editor's Note: The following is an interview with Sister Karen Grochowski who joined the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration four years ago after graduating from the University of Wyoming.**

**Q.** How did you discern the call to religious life? It was something that was on my mind of and on for several years.

**A.** I visited with Father Carl Gallinger who was vocations director at that time and also with the campus minister at St. Paul's Newman Center in Laramie. I also spent time with the Benedictines in Walburga and with their vocations director there. Eventually when my vocation became clearer, I sought out a community. I found the community I am in on the internet. I searched for three years, all the while keeping in contact with the membership person at the community I am in. I spent a weekend there and then came back for 6 weeks to get a better idea of the experience.

**Q.** Were there people or experiences that made a big impact on your becoming a religious?

**A.** Members of the various faith communities that I was a part of growing up influenced me. Seeing their faith and how it influenced their daily lives had an impact on me. Two who come to mind are Father Roger Schmit, OSB at the Newman Center and Joe Zenk who was campus minister. They were very real in their faith and shared that faith with others.

**Q.** How did you find the Franciscans?

**A.** I had been to World Youth Day in Paris and we stopped in Assisi where Saint Francis was born. I had a real sense in

that place of the Spirit of St. Francis, and it really touched me. In my search, I later Googled "Franciscan woman religious" and found this community.

**Q.** What are the charisms of your community?

**A.** The charism of my community is basically to be the loving presence of God in the world. Perpetual adoration is also carried out mainly by the retired sisters at the motherhouse in La Crosse Wisconsin. The biggest gift of the Franciscan order is the sense of God's presence throughout all of creation. I feel like it is a blessing to be a part of a community of like-minded women and supportive women and to be challenged to live out my faith more fully.

**Q.** What kind of work do you do?

**A.** I work in a home for adults with special needs in Maplewood, Minnesota. What I enjoy most about my work is getting to know the uniqueness of each of the clients I work with and to see the way they each reflect the different aspects of God and their gifts.

**Q.** How is your life different than it was before?

**A.** I am probably more intentional in my commitment to live out the faith, and I am trying to grow and learn more spiritually and theologically. I have the benefit of being in a community that is willing to support and share the journey with me.

**Q.** How do you gain strength for your journey of faith?

**A.** Through prayer- both personal and shared in community. It is the one thing that holds the community together. It bonds us even with all of our differences and uniqueness.

**Q.** What would you say to encourage other young women thinking about a vocation to religious life?

**A.** I would say that the vocational call if one has it is going to be there, and even when there are times of doubt, you will eventually find clarity. I would tell them to seek out other religious or try to connect with Father Ray Rodriguez or someone who might know of other women and try to make connections that way. The internet is an option as well. Part of the journey is to trust that there are others out there, and you are not alone. Don't be afraid to go and experience a weekend or to visit different communities. It doesn't mean you have to commit to that community, but it is good to see how they live out their lives, and eventually that information could be helpful in figuring out the type of community you would like.

**Q.** How long have you been a member of FSPA?

**A.** I had received my degree in Psychology from University of Wyoming when I joined the community, just over 4 years ago. I spent a year and a half as an associate which is the equivalent of a postulant. Then, the next 2 years as a novice. I have been temporary professed since last May, which means that I have made the vows of poverty, obedience and consecrated celibacy. Now it is time for me to decide if I want to make the final profession.