



Sharing from FSPA to You

Soaring with the Spirit *An interview with Sister Eileen McKenzie*

Sister Eileen, please share two or three experiences of your time as a temporary professed sister that led you to decide to profess your final vows with FSPA.

I'm not sure there were specific "experiences" that led me to decide as much as a gradual growing in my understanding of what living the vows entails. For example, my understanding of the vow of poverty has broadened and deepened. When I first made my vows, I focused primarily on poverty in terms of money and material things. During my temporary vows I came to understand that poverty includes other ways in which I'm radically dependent upon God — in my circumstances, my ministries, my relationships, and my health, for instance. So, living the vows for six years really helped me to understand what they entail. I imagine I will continue to grow in my understanding of what such living means.

Living and ministering with my FSPA sisters also led me to profess my final vows. As I grew in my understanding of the vows, I was influenced and supported by how my sisters lived

their vows. The vows can, at times, be challenging to live. In spite of the challenges, I experienced love, joy and support with my FSPA sisters to such a



Sister Eileen professes her vows.

Photo by Jane Comeau



Sister Eileen enjoys a moment of quiet.

Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

degree that I finally realized I couldn't imagine living any other way with any other community. That is when I knew I was ready to profess my final vows.

At this point in your spiritual journey what would you recommend to a woman considering religious life as an FSPA?

I recommend several things: First, pray for the Spirit's guidance!

Second, be in conversation with a spiritual director who has experience in discerning vocations.

Third, be in conversation with FSPA. If you know an FSPA sister, spend time with her. You can call her (or ask her to call you), talk over a cup of coffee or lunch, email — whatever way works for you to get to know her. The sisters love to share about the community and many understand your questions or wonderings about religious life, specifically with FSPA. If you don't know a sister, or if you don't live around any, call the membership office at 1-888-683-FSPA or email at membership@fspa.org to discuss your questions and learn about the community. The FSPA website (www.fspa.org) has great information and tells a lot about us, too.

Fourth, trust where the Spirit leads you. When I first came to FSPA, I was preparing to enter another community. I was quite surprised at my interest and call to FSPA because it didn't fit with my own plans to enter the other community. After serious prayer, spiritual direction, a retreat given by the vocation office in my local diocese, and reflecting upon my interaction with FSPA up to that point, I realized that although I had my plans that were very good ones, the Spirit was calling me to FSPA. I have never regretted trusting God in following that call.

And finally, if you think you might have a call, act upon it. Whether it is making a phone call to get more information, or participating in a "Come and See" weekend, God calls us in awareness to action. Just do it!

Religious Life – Is It for Me? Come and See!



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Make a Discernment Retreat with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

You will have the opportunity to be with our sisters as you learn about FSPA life. This weekend offers time for discussions, reflection, liturgy, relaxation and one-on-one conversations with sisters. Take some time to

- experience the life of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and learn more about religious life.
- pray and reflect about God's will for you.
- meet FSPA sisters and see what a community of sisters is really like.

The retreat weekends are held at St. Rose Convent, the motherhouse, in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

**Upcoming dates include
February 28-March 1, 2009
June 6-7, 2009**

If you would like to come to one of our scheduled retreat weekends, but can't, just contact us and we will arrange another time to visit that works for you.

Call or email us: 1-888-683-FSPA membership@fspa.org. You can also chat with Sister Dorothy on Facebook at Dorothy@fspa.org.

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Giving and Receiving Life *An interview with Sister Dawn Kutt*

Sister Dawn, you are a former Viterbo University student. Is this how you met the FSPA? Tell us about your journey to FSPA.

My Journey! I think there are a few sisters who could answer this better than me! However, my journey to the FSPA community reflects back many years given my family history. My great aunt, Sister Clotilda George, was an inspiration to me and would always share her story and welcome me to think about religious life as an FSPA. I knew early in life that God was gently tapping at my heart. As I grew stronger in my faith and my connection to the Divine One, I was strengthened through my Catholic education and values that I set early in life for myself. I promised God if He could give direction to my life, I would follow where He wanted my life to be.

As I journeyed through life as a young adult, always valuing the gift of the Eucharist, the call to religious life grew stronger and stronger. However, there were always the “but and what if’s” that would interfere, but as I sat in the confusion of it at times, I knew it was God only who could answer my questions if I allowed myself to listen.

Through the years, I had come to know many FSPA through various encounters including ministry, Viterbo College, and



Sister Dawn in her ministry.

through the opportunity to share my love of nursing at the Villa during my college years. As I shared my confusion, yet deepest desires to follow God’s call, with Sister Arlene Melder, she encouraged me to think about the affiliation process as a part of my journey. So, with Sister Arlene as my contact sister, I began the process of covenant affiliation which was a growth-filled time in my life and connected me deeper to what God was asking of me. Feeling a restless heart, I connected with Sister Laurice, vocation director at the time, who too began asking the deeper questions. I am very grateful to her for her patience, support and understanding. At times when my uncertainty blocked the journey, she continued to walk the journey with me, always believing in my vocation, and helping me to believe in it, too!

As a temporary professed sister, you are continuing to serve in healthcare as a nurse practitioner. Is there something special about your ministry in healthcare that you would like to share with us?

My ministry in healthcare, particularly with the elderly, first as a certified nursing assistant and now as an RN, truly energizes and enriches my life. I have had the opportunity to share my talents in healthcare in many different capacities, including administration, but the call to direct patient contact has called me back to my roots of “hands-on nursing.” I have had the opportunity to walk with many people as they made their journey home to be with a God who loves them and welcomes them with open arms to a new life. My own willingness to be open to this journey has deepened my acceptance of death and enriches my spiritual journey. I have learned from my elders to never take life for granted, but live in the moment and treasure the gifts in that moment.

You are ministering to the senior FSPA sisters who have lived many years of their lives as women religious. How does this experience enrich your life as a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration?



Sister Dawn enjoys the company of Sister Dolorice.



Phone calls keep Sister Dawn busy, too!

In my ministry at the Villa as an RN, I am blessed by the presence of wisdom, love and prayer. Each sister touches my life in a special way and the opportunity to be present at this time in their lives brings a sense of gratification and deep respect to my life. It truly is a gift to have this opportunity to minister to my sisters as they share a part of their life. I am always grateful for the opportunity to listen to their lived stories and what sustained them throughout their years. I admire their deep respect to perpetual adoration, the Eucharist, and what it means to truly be Franciscan in a relational community.

What do you see when you look into your future as an FSPA?

As I look to the future as an FSPA, I see a community filled with hope, rich in heritage, and relational.

An interview by the Editorial Staff

Soaring with the Spirit *An interview with Sister Eileen McKenzie* (continued from page 1)

What are some of your hopes and dreams for your future as you profess your final vows?

My big hope is that I am faithful to God in my life — continually growing in love, compassion and service. If I follow God’s lead, I know that I experience life beyond anything I might dream.

Tell us about your ministry and some of the FSPA values that you live out as you minister to others.

I minister in holistic healing. I am a nurse and I practice traditional Chinese medicine. Most people come to me for acupuncture but I incorporate herbs, dietary recommendations, spiritual practices and lifestyle recommenda-

tions a lot in my practice. FSPA strongly values wholistic living and I sense my call is to embody this value in health and healing. With our long tradition of perpetual adoration, ministering in holistic health is quite natural, particularly around spirituality and healing.

An interview by the Editorial Staff

From Our Readers

Dear Readers,

During this time we have received two similar questions from different persons. Both questions are about the religious habit. One reader asked if there is still meaning in wearing the habit, while another asked why FSPA chooses not to wear the religious habit. We hope to answer both questions satisfactorily. God bless you! — Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

These questions elicited a very significant memory for me. I can remember where I was standing, the feeling of the sun on my back and the Sister with whom I was speaking some 40 years ago. We as FSPA were just beginning to negotiate not wearing the beautiful habit that had been our recognizable sign for almost 100 years. On this October afternoon I found myself confirming a life choice and, as is the case with most choices, this was a choice between two goods.

As I ratified my inner choice to discontinue wearing the formal habit, I was at this time choosing to let my life be my habit. I was conscious of the fact that this choice was a risk to the security of identity that I had experienced in wearing the identifiable garb of FSPA. Now, in retrospect, I have come to appreciate in a new way the value of common identity that a religious habit gives. As the numbers of women religious decrease, so does the visibility. And shared visibility does give witness to shared values, shared life style and God's presence in our world. But it is not the only way.

In *Unity in Diversity*, the Constitutions of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, we read: "As a sign of our religious consecration and witness to poverty, our clothing is to be modest, simple and appropriate to the culture in which we serve." This call to simple living and modesty in a consumer culture that exploits the human body is our call to witness Gospel values within the context of the multiple cultures in which we minister. The specific identifying external symbols that we wear are the Medal of the Blessed Sacrament and our common ring. Both were part of our traditional religious garb.

I continue to be surprised by the number of people who do not know me personally, yet spontaneously address me as "Sister". Is this not what is most critical in our world of fractured relationships - that we BE sister to one another, no matter what we wear?

Blessings and peace in the loving God who unites us all,

Sister Anita Beskar



FSPA medal and ring



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Spiritual Opportunities

FSPA welcomes you to participate in spiritual growth opportunities in the multiple spirituality centers where we minister. Spiritual companionship and guidance is available at each center.

Franciscan Spirituality Center
 920 Market St
 La Crosse WI 54601-4782
 608-791-5295 or fscenter@fspa.org
www.franciscanspiritualitycenter.org

At-Home Retreat for Advent and Lent
 Advent Retreat dates Dec. 1-15
 Lenten Retreat dates March 23-April 6

Everywhere a Blessing:
 A Celtic Spirituality Retreat May 31-June 5

Green Spirituality Retreat July 5-10

Forgive, Because It Feels So Good! Feb. 20-21

Marywood FSC
 3560 Hwy 51 N
 Arbor Vitae WI 54568-9538
 715-385-3750
info@marywoodsc.com

Marywood Spirituality Center offers various types of retreats and programs as well as spiritual companionship. Please contact the center for more information about upcoming programs or about making a retreat in one of their lakeside cabins.

Mary Magdalene:
 Icon Retreat Workshop March 8-14

Creative Approaches to the
 Prayer of St. Francis May 22-26

Prairiewoods FSC
 120 E Boyson Rd
 Hiawatha IA 52233-1277
 319-395-6700
www.prairiewoods.org

Winter Reflection and Discernment
 Retreat Dec 5-7

New Year Beginnings Retreat Jan. 2-4

FSPA Snapshots



Silvana Panza, FSPA

Silvana Panza, FSPA, is a native Italian who presently lives and ministers in Chicago, Illinois, where she is an Italian teacher and a spiritual director. Silvana comes to her ministry with a background in media and catechesis. She holds a doctorate in education and a master's degree in spirituality from the Gregorian University in Rome.



Lucille Winnike, FSPA

Lucille Winnike, FSPA, ministers at Prairiewoods, an FSPA spirituality center where persons can explore their relationship with God, one another and all of creation. Lucille has been ministering to people in spiritual direction since Prairiewoods opened its doors in 1996. Lucille considers it a privilege and delight to be with them on their spiritual journeys.



Barbara Marie Link, FSPA

Barbara Marie Link, FSPA, serves as a board certified chaplain working with Heartland Home Hospice patients in the Milwaukee area. She works closely with teams of healthcare professionals to provide comfort and quality of life to patients and families. Barbara sees her role as one of journeying with and midwifing patients to eternity.

Footprints



How the Prayer of St. Francis Inspired a Kind, Wealthy Man to be a Friar

St. Francis arrived one evening at a great and powerful gentleman's house. This wealthy man kindly received and gave lodging to Francis and his companion as though they were angels of God. Because of this St. Francis felt affection for this man, considering how when he entered his house he had embraced and kissed him as a friend, had humbly washed his feet and wiped and kissed them and then had lit a great fire and prepared a table with excellent food. While they ate he had waited on them joyfully.

When St. Francis and his companion had finished eating, the man said: "Father, I offer you all that I am and have. If you need a habit or mantle or anything, buy them and I will pay for them; and remember that I am ready to provide for whatever you need because, by God's grace, I am able to. I have many temporal goods; and therefore for love of God, who has given me so much, I willingly do good for his poor ones."

St. Francis, seeing the man's goodness and kindness and all that he offered them, had great affection for him and said to his companion, "This nobleman would be good for our Order. Know, beloved friar, that kindness is one of the attributes of God for kindness is a sister to love. Now, because I have found so much divine goodness in this good man, I would gladly have him for a companion, and therefore intend some day to return to him. Possibly God will touch his heart to desire to accompany us in the service of God. Meanwhile, we will pray God to put this desire in his heart."

What a wonderful thing! A few days after St. Francis had prayed, God put this desire



Antique watercolor by P.Subercaseaux

this man will offer himself to us and become our companion." And they went. And when they came to his house, St. Francis said to his companion: "Wait for me a little while, because I wish first to pray to God to make our journey fruitful, and that it may please Jesus Christ to grant to us, poor and weak servants, this nobleman. After he said this, he withdrew in prayer to a place where the nobleman could see him.

And so, as it pleased God, while the man was walking about, he saw St. Francis devoutly praying before Christ, who, in great splendor, appeared to him as he prayed and stood

into the heart of that gentleman; and St. Francis said to his companion: "My brother, let us go to the house of the courteous man, for I am confident in God that

before him; and then he saw St. Francis lifted bodily from the ground, for a good while. When he saw this he was so touched by God and inspired to join them that, in fervor he left his palace and ran to St. Francis. When he reached Francis, who was still praying, he knelt down at his feet and, with great earnestness and devotion, implored him to receive him into his Order, and allow him to do penance with him. Then St. Francis, understanding that God had heard his prayer, and that that gentleman was urgently asking for that which he wanted, got up and, in fervor and gladness of spirit, embraced and kissed him, very devoutly thanking God who had added such a gift to his Order. And the gentleman said to St. Francis: "My father, what would you have me do? I am ready to obey whatever you ask and to give all I have to the poor and to follow Christ with you, leaving all I have behind." And so, according to the counsel of St. Francis, this man gave all his possessions to the poor and entered the Order, and lived in great penitence and holiness of life speaking always of holy things.

I Fioretti di S. Francesco, capitolo XXXVII, Edizioni Porziuncola.

Translated and adapted by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Say It With a Smile "Watch Out When Francis Prays For You"



Vol. 5 No. 2 FALL 2008

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