

Show me a sign

A GUIDE FOR DISCERNING RELIGIOUS LIFE



SPRING 2016

What does a promise mean to you?



As a child, if I made a promise, it was expected that I'd follow through, no matter what. While some situations require us to adapt, one's promise is important. And that's the case for a promise made by FSPA that is celebrated each St. Joseph's Day: the promise of perpetual adoration. The promise began in 1849 when 12 women and men, Third Order Franciscans, left their homeland in Ettenbeuren, Bavaria, to begin a religious community. They had a threefold goal: to spread the Gospel among German immigrants, to educate children and to establish perpetual adoration. Many challenges came up along the way but by August 1, 1878, perpetual adoration was established. The long-awaited promise was fulfilled and kept for generations to come. Each year, as a part of a prayer service on the Feast of St. Joseph, we renew our promise to deepen our practice of perpetual adoration. This continuous prayer serves as our guiding light in active ministries. We lovingly refer to the Adoration Chapel as our powerhouse for action.

Here, FSPA share their experiences of perpetual adoration and how, over time, it has deepened for them.

Ronalda Hophan, FSPA, volunteers as a meals coordinator at a winter warming center for homeless in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Sister Ronalda, reflecting on her experience of perpetual adoration in this ministry, says, *"Each time I go into the Adoration Chapel, I take with me all the people who have needs and God answers to what those needs are. I know they have more needs than just food. If we provide that it gives them hope and they can look for ways to meet other needs."*

Mary Myron Stork, FSPA, who recently celebrated her 100th birthday, has experienced many years of community life. When asked how her experiences matured since first encountering perpetual adoration she answered, *"When I began the process of becoming a sister, a regular hour of prayer was incorporated in our daily lives. It helped us to grow into the spirit of prayer. I liked perpetual adoration; it was one of the reasons I came to the convent."*

When asked "Now, as you stand from the wisdom perspective of 100 years, what has been your greatest insight into the experience of perpetual adoration?" Sister Mary Myron said, *"It has helped me*



Top: St. Joseph's Day celebration

Bottom: FSPA Adoration Chapel

to be more personal with my prayers in the Adoration Chapel. Prayer is definitely "Vitamin P." Adoration helps me to become the Eucharist, to become like Christ and walk in his footsteps. Sometimes I go to the adoration chapel just to gaze on the Lord. I love to gaze on the Lord." Continued...

 **Franciscan Sisters**
of Perpetual Adoration
Modern Lives. Sacred Traditions.

Constance Walton, FSPA, is a pastoral associate and director of religious education at Northwoods Catholic Churches in Boulder Junction, Wisconsin. When asked how she experiences perpetual adoration while ministering in the parish she replied, *“The strength of perpetual adoration is life-giving energy for me. It is a treasured gift that FSPA gives daily to the people I serve and meet. In our church bulletins, we have both the FSPA phone number and email address for prayer requests. This has sparked prayer requests through me and directly to St. Rose Convent. Having someone pray 24/7 for one’s concerns brings a sense of peace and reassurance to those requesting and those receiving prayers. Personally, perpetual adoration keeps me strong and vibrant so I can minister to the needs of others I encounter. Wearing my FSPA medal with the monstrance side showing draws questions of faith and life and often*

leads to conversations that are amazingly spirit-filled.”

Speaking of spirit-filled conversations, Joann Gehling, FSPA, engages in many as a spiritual director at Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center in Hiawatha, Iowa. I asked Sister Joann, “How does perpetual adoration influence your work as a spiritual director?” and “Can you tell me what you have learned or gained from this kind of regular spiritual practice?” She answered, *“Perpetual adoration is a continuation of the Eucharist in our daily lives. At the Last Supper Jesus ‘took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take it; this is my Body’” (Mark 14: 22). As eucharistic people, we are rooted in this same dynamic ritual. We take the bread of our lives, our daily joys and struggles; we desire and seek God’s blessing; we break open what presents itself at each moment;*

*and we give ourselves in loving service to others as the **Body of Christ.***

*In my ministry as a spiritual director, this same process evolves. In the early morning I sit in quiet prayer centering in God’s love, then **take** a look at my calendar and ask for a **blessing** on whomever or whatever may be part of my day. When a directee arrives, generally we open our session with a **prayer of blessing** before they **break open** whatever it is they’re seeking, allowing them to go forth and continue **giving** to others as bread for the journey.”*

Spending time in the Adoration Chapel fuels us for mission and deepens our personal relationships with God and others. Celebrating on the Feast of St. Joseph is a touchstone experience in our lives every year. We recommit to the promise made on our behalf a long time ago. 🌹

As we celebrate this Year of Mercy we are each invited to reflect on how we plan to be more merciful.



Sister Catherine Kaiser
During this Year of Mercy, I will pay special attention to the call of mercy in the Liturgy of the Hours and the Scripture readings in the Liturgy of the Word.



Sister Sharon Bongiorno
I will pray each day the prayer written by Pope Francis. In my work visiting the homebound, I will listen more carefully to their stories, their complaints, their frustrations and help them to see God’s merciful hand in their lives.



Sister Joanne Moeller
During this Year of Mercy, I plan to evaluate all of my relationships and to practice forgiveness.

DID YOU KNOW?

What is perpetual adoration?

Through perpetual eucharistic adoration, we offer God continuous praise and thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, displayed in the monstrance. Nurtured and strengthened by Jesus’ presence, we live out this adoration in our daily lives as we strive to help those in need. We pray for all of the intentions that come from around the world. 🌹

JESUS





Discerners seeking direction: Common discernment questions

Q: How do I know if a sign is real?

A: The Scripture passage 1 John 4:1 comes to mind; it's a reminder to see if what you experience is of God. It's helpful to:

- Pray with the experience.
- Observe other things happening in your life.
- Talk to a friend or spiritual director.
- Trust that God brings everything into the light.

Q: Why are the signs hard to explain?

A: It is difficult to explain an experience to someone who was not there. My context, my words and my feelings all seem beyond explanation. Remember to:

- Reflect on experience in your life.
- Ponder how you are feeling.
- Consider Matthew 13:10–17 and listen to what God may be saying to you. Why worry about what others think?
- Ask if opinions stop you from following God's call.

- Dream about what you want to do with your life.

Francis and Clare struggled with these same questions. They both gave up power, wealth, comfort and prestige to follow God's call. St. Francis became a fool for God, a title he embraced. While their family and friends may have grumbled, somehow God's invitation was sweeter and provided what they needed along the way. 🌹

Religious life across congregations

Recently several religious communities gathered at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois, for a symposium sponsored by The Center for the Study of Consecrated Life called *Community Life and Mission: Toward a Future Full of Hope*. Timothy Radcliffe, a Dominican friar of the English Province, was the featured presenter. This symposium celebrated the conclusion of the Year of Consecrated Life and the beginning of the Year of Mercy.

As religious life evolves and changes, it is essential for religious communities to gather together to discuss priorities in this way of life. Creating a network of support, resources and knowledge is a way in which the Gospel can continue to flourish. Many women entering religious life enter into incorporation programs that are collaborative across congregational lines. This networking complements incorporation in one's own congregational mission and charism.

Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration Laurie Sullivan and Kristin Peters, both temporary professed, attended the symposium. We asked Sisters Laurie and Kristin about

their experiences that may be helpful for women who are considering religious life.

What excites and challenges you about being a vowed woman religious today?

Sister Laurie: *It's the connection to the wider world and relationships as we develop networks with more communities. The challenge is to maintain a sense of connection with my own community ministering apart from so many. Another challenge is to intentionally make an effort to connect and to build community with other religious and laity.*

What do you carry away with you from this experience?

Sister Kristin: *In response to Father Radcliff's presentation, I walked away with many questions which reach the depths of who I am as a sister in a religious community. He began the symposium with the statement "Our bodies are places of grace ... and thus being embodied in God is an entirely physical matter." This matter of being embodied by God was striking to me. How is it that I am embodied by God? This question touches who I am in all the*



Sister Kristin and Sister Laurie at CTU.

places where I walk and minister and also the places where I engage in prayer and meditation. A physical being, through me, God's grace resides. Grace changes me and those who my life touches.

Life is full of questions and ways in which our hearts and minds are led to growth. The journey of discernment of religious life is also full of questions. It is within the gift of community that one has the opportunity to learn and reach out beyond what may be thought possible. Each yields possibility of ongoing growth. Discernment is conceivable when we gather for conversation. In this mutuality we take time to listen and share with one another matters closest to the heart. 🌹



Connect with your feet

Contact Sister Amy in the membership office at membership@fspa.org or 888-683-3772. Our website is a great resource for more information about FSPA. Visit www.fspa.org.



Connect with our mission

We sponsor three spirituality centers and a cultural immersion program that may help you grow in your spiritual life.

- Franciscan Spirituality Center
La Crosse, Wisconsin
www.fscenter.org
- Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center
Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin
www.marywoodsc.org
- Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center
Hiawatha, Iowa
www.prairiewoods.org
- Global Awareness Through Experience (GATE)
www.GATE-travel.org

Connect with our blog

The *Show me a sign* newsletter is published twice per year. In between issues, follow the *Show me a sign* blog to keep in touch www.fspa.org/showmeasign.

- » Find a quiet space where you feel comfortable
- » Take a few moments to settle into stillness
- » Ask for God's guidance in this time of prayer
- » Take a few moments to ponder the questions before answering them
- » Search your heart, and listen
- » When you are ready, pray the closing prayer and thank God for your time together

Questions of the Heart

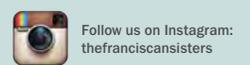
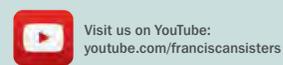
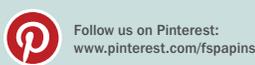
- » "God, are you calling me to religious life? If so, why me?"
- » "What are the gifts that you have given me that could be used in service of the Church and world today?"
- » "Who can I talk to about discerning a call to religious life?"
- » "What do I need to do to take the next step?"



*God of the Journey,
Be with me as I take the next steps on my discernment path.
Help me to recall the stories of Moses, Jeremiah, Samuel and Mary.
May I remember that you are with me in each step, every excuse,
Every fear and every yes.
Help me to make time for quiet as I go about my busy life.
May I be open to the signs that you provide as I learn to trust the
Process of discernment.
In your name I offer this prayer from the depth of my heart.
AMEN*

Scripture Guides

- » Calling of Moses: Exodus 3:4–19
- » Calling of Jeremiah: 1:4–19
- » Calling of Mary Luke: 1:26–38
- » Calling of Samuel: 3:1–10



Volume 1 Issue 1 • membership@fspa.org • 1-888-683-3772

Show me a sign is published bi-annually by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration membership office, membership@fspa.org. Editor: Sister Amy Taylor. Proofreader: Sister Anita Beskar. Stay in touch between newsletters at our blog, www.fspa.org/showmeasign.

