



BY SISTER SARAH HENNESSEY

The practice of perpetual adoration is a wonderful way to enter into contemplative prayer in the presence of the beloved.

Adoration is to stand before the absolute mystery of God with your whole self, just as you are. In our Catholic faith, we believe God became human through Jesus and that the bread consecrated at the eucharistic liturgy expresses that loving presence in a particular and concrete way. It has been a part of the mission of FSPA since Aug. 1, 1878. Adorers pray for the needs of the world in general and also the specific request for prayers that are sent to FSPA online (www.fspa.org), by phone (608-782-5610) and through text message (601-308-1849).



Often individuals ask, "what do I do if I go to adoration?"

Here are a few suggestions of the many ways you can spend time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

- *Let God gaze on you. Bring your whole self and just be.*
- *Share with God everything in your heart. Then listen.*
- *Say a prayer you know slowly and reflectively.*
- *Read the Scripture for the day or a favorite Bible verse.*
- *Pray for the needs of the whole world, your family, friends.*
- *Take radical action: be still.*

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

"Show me a sign" is published bi-annually. In between issues, follow the blog at www.fspa.org/showmeasign.

Show me a sign

A GUIDE FOR DISCERNING RELIGIOUS LIFE



FALL 2016

What is your mission?

What will you do with your gifts and talents?

In some form, this question has probably been asked of you since preschool. Do you remember your teachers asking what you want to be when you grow up? Do you remember essays written about your heroes and why you admire the work they do?

Answers from preschoolers and early elementary school students range from superheroes to doctors and often celebrities. Over the years of middle and high school the question becomes a bit more focused. Course selection is based on interests and small glimpses of possible future career goals. By the time one enters college the question of the future has become broader than "a profession." Gifts and talents emerge in the context of the complex world and the web of relationships.

In times of transition, question of mission arises. What is your mission in the world? It can be a life altering question to ponder in prayer. Your values shape the question of your mission. What are your core beliefs about life, faith, relationships, work, leisure time, living arrangements, money, power and politics? In pondering your options you may discover the call to a collective mission. This initial attraction to sharing a mission with others may lead to friendships

and consideration of community-style living. It is courageous to put your values at the forefront of life as you begin to make decisions. Mission is more than what one does.

Sorting out individual mission is huge. Choosing to join a group of people and commit to a life of mission is amazing. Finding ways as a group to uphold a collective mission such as in a religious congregation takes commitment to ongoing conversations, flexibility, adaptability and a desire to perceive the needs of the world at any moment in time.

A group that shares a collective calling articulates it in a mission statement. Mission statements stand as a touchstone from which members constantly evaluate action and adjust to an ever-changing landscape of events in life. Each member commits to carry forth the mission and contribute to such ongoing service in the world today. There is a nebulous quality of mission as well. It grows, adapts and morphs over time. Mission is never stagnant. It calls forth the best in all who dare to accept it as their lifelong commitment.



Recently the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration gathered for a missioning prayer service (pictured above). Sisters from across the nation and international borders gathered in Mary of the Angels Chapel to receive their mission cards for the year. Each mission card specifically identifies the ministry to which each sister is called and will do in service of the Gospel, in the name of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

- **What are your values?**
- **What is your mission?**
- **Have you ever thought of exploring religious life?**



On Snapchat: FSPAsnaps



On Facebook: [facebook.com/franciscansisters](https://www.facebook.com/franciscansisters)



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Discerning religious life: sisters answer your questions

Q: How do you define mission?

Sister Donna Mae: Serve God's people by being sent forth to carry out an assignment or task for the coming year.

Sister Mary Boniface: I see mission as the ministry assigned by community leadership (the norm in the early days of religious life). The work you were prepared for and carried out in the spirit of loving service—sharing your life with God's people. It means accepting them and working with them while living a life dedicated to God rather than for money or personal praise. I think mission is always loving service, whatever and wherever you happen to be, as long as it remains related to community for us.

Sister Corrina: As a Franciscan sister I define my mission as following the Gospel in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and being the presence of Christ to others. I think this fundamental stance will help in making a loving response to anyone and any situation in the present moment.



Sister Donna Mae Venteicher

"To today's discerner exploring religious life: be yourself. Think. Love your family. Keep an open mind to whatever happens."

Q: How has mission shaped the focus of your ministries?

Sister Donna Mae: As I meditate on the different ministries, I believe the mission card we received recently says it all: 'As a vowed Franciscan woman centered in Eucharist committed to loving presence, I am called to serve and give of myself and my gifts to the people I meet.'

Sister Mary Boniface: I tried to keep the same idea of loving service and dedicated life whether I was an x-ray technologist, an adjunct faculty member or a volunteer in social services, parish ministry or other volunteer ministry.

Sister Corrina: I minister in the work of incorporation for FSPA and serve as a spiritual director. Both are fundamental to the growth and evolution of God's kingdom.



Sister Mary Boniface Kriener

"When discerning the call and religious communities, keep a good sense of humor and remember that when God closes a door, a better one opens."

Q: What continues to feed your soul and excite you about being a vowed member of FSPA?

Sister Donna Mae: I enjoy looking around, seeing what I can do and reaching always for eternal life. I visit the elderly, as they built the communities we live in and are now in retirement homes. I like to encourage them to continue to see the good in themselves and what they still offer the world.

Sister Mary Boniface: I enjoy working with others, visiting and encouraging them to see the good. Friends my age have passed away and I continue to ask what can I do and keep reaching for eternal life. I have always enjoyed being an FSPA.

Sister Corrina: I see a lot of excitement and growth for the future and am constantly asking how we remain relevant to society. We don't fit into a mold; we keep looking for the needs and where God is leading, always willing to risk boldly the future. 🌸



Sister Corrina Thomas

"Be very attentive to the synchronistic things happening in your life. God often leads one in that manner."



Discerners seeking direction: Common discernment questions

Q: How do I find a religious community that is right for me?

A: Pray to God for guidance and wisdom as you begin exploring religious life.

- Check out websites and social media channels of different religious communities, including www.fspa.org.
- Explore www.vocationnetwork.org, which offers information about a variety of religious communities, a matching questionnaire and articles about discernment.
- Email or call the congregation you are

interested in to begin a conversation.

- Talk to sisters you know and ask them about their congregations.
- Attend a Come and See experience that allows you to go and visit in person.
- Check out your diocesan vocation office website to find out what congregations are nearby.

Q: How long does it take to become a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration and what are the steps to become a full member?

A: Once a woman is accepted as a candidate with FSPA, the process of incorporation is nine years. Mutual discernment of readiness to move to each step of formation is part of the process. Each woman begins as an associate. The process continues through novitiate, temporary professed and final vows.

The process is detailed at www.fspa.org > **Join Us > Become a Sister > Member Process.** 🌸

You are in good company when mission is challenging

The pathway to mission begins with "yes" to God's invitation.

For St. Clare, "yes" to God's call meant leaving her home to pursue a life dedicated to prayer and service to God's people. In the middle of the night and against her family's wishes, she left privilege behind. In Clare's time, women were a commodity. Families arranged marriages for their daughters to gain power and economic resources. Wealthy women, such as those belonging to Clare's societal class (and allowed to enter monastic life), joined endowed monasteries, ensuring respectability for the families to be associated with the monastery. Clare was inspired by the preaching of St. Francis of Assisi and his example of living in poverty without the trappings of possessions. It is this inspiration that led her to stand up and claim the privilege of poverty as she wrote the rule of life for her community. Today the order is commonly referred to as the

Poor Clares. Clare dared to ask for a new way of life, for not only her congregation but for women religious. She dialogued with bishops and the pope to be free of all the strings that came attached to money and goods received from the land and benefactors.

For Clare and her sisters, staying in dialogue to receive the privilege of poverty was critical for their style of mission. They put everything on the line, including their safety, to serve and be faithful to the mission of the community. The small community of courageous women even withstood an attack on their convent, as the Saracens threatened their safety. God's call to mission opened new possibilities and challenges for the women who joined Clare. Clare's love of the poor Christ and desire to



Sister Kristin looks upon the statue of St. Clare in the Viterbo University courtyard.

imitate him fueled her commitment to a countercultural stance in life. She dared to create a community of equals and serve all who came to the doors of San Damiano regardless of their social standing or ability to pay.

St. Clare experienced highs and lows of mission. The question becomes, why commit yourself to a mission that will have such unpredictable outcome? A better question, why not? Is life predictable and assured? Might bigger dreams than you can even imagine be in store? Have you considered religious life? Will you say yes? 🌸