



A quarterly newsletter on call and discernment published by the
Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

Greetings of Peace and Every Good!

Greetings during this blessed season and welcome to the winter issue of **Journey**, a quarterly newsletter published for women reflecting on God's call in their lives. May you find material in this issue that is helpful for your prayer and reflection. The theme for this issue is **Called to Lead Others to Christ**. Like John the Baptist in the Gospel reading in this issue, may we be a "voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord!'"



Barbara Kwiatkowski, OSF
Vocation Director

REFLECTION

Each issue of Journey features a reflection by one of our Sisters on her own call to religious life. In this issue, Deborah Gaughan who entered our community in August as an affiliate or pre-novice, shares her vocation story. Deborah lives in our Formation Community in Joliet and works in Customer Service for Hewitt Associates. She also volunteers with Young Adult Ministry in the Diocese of Joliet.

Born in Chicago, I am one of 6 children of Patrick and Lorraine Gaughan and lived the majority of my life in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. I attended St. Margaret Mary grade school in Algonquin and was taught by the Springfield Dominican Sisters. As I look back, I now realize that God planted a small seed inside my heart calling me to religious life, even at a young age. I had thought about becoming a Sister in grade school and also at the beginning of high school.

But when the kids started making fun of me at the public high school for talking about wanting to be a Sister, I quickly put this thought to rest. However, God had planted a seed and did not give up on me.

I went through the majority of my high school years with little thought about becoming a Sister; however, God was still an important part of my life as I was still active by attending the church youth group. After graduation, I worked for a year before deciding I wanted to continue my education. I went to the local junior college and was very involved in the Newman Group on campus. School did not come easy to me, but I was having lots of fun with the Newman Group. So when it came to transferring to a four year school to further my education, something inside told me I wanted a Catholic college. Yes, God was helping that seed grow. I found my Catholic college, Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin, by searching the internet. I went to visit the college and knew I had found the place for me. The Chapel was beautiful, the setting was gorgeous! I met the campus minister and knew I would love to get more involved. Edgewood was operated by the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters. I was very happy

"God planted a small seed inside my heart calling me to religious life, even at a young age."

-Deborah Gaughan



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Go where the journey leads...

REFLECTION (CONTINUED)



In the community for one day, and already I am recruited to play the chimes!

being involved in Campus Ministry and thought life was great. I had faith that I could do just about anything.

However, after college, I struggled through some hard years and was questioning my faith. I decided I needed to visit other churches and experience

different religions since I did not understand what the Catholic Church was all about and I no longer felt as though I belonged. After several confusing years of not finding what I was looking for, I decided to start over and go back to the Catholic Church. I had moved back to Illinois, was living on my own and had a good job, but something was missing. God had provided that seed He planted with some water and it was starting to grow. I went to St. Mary's in Buffalo Grove and joined the RCIA group. This was the best decision I made since graduating college. I learned who God was, what the church was teaching, what it meant to be Catholic and about the teachings of



Sister Jennifer Byrnes (left) welcomes Deborah to the Community.

Vatican II. At the Easter Vigil Mass in 2002, I stood before God and recommitted myself to God and my faith.

I quickly became more active in the church, becoming a Eucharistic Minister, and becoming involved in the Northwest Young Adult Ministry (NW-YAM) within the archdiocese. Through St. Mary's and NW- YAM, I met some very special friends, Paul and Sarah. At this point I transferred parishes and started to attend Holy Family in Inverness, IL. I soon became a Young Adult Leader at Holy Family and a member of the board for the Northwest Young Adult group. God continued to water the seed that had been planted many years earlier. I now realized I was most joyful when I was attending Mass, being involved in



Deborah and members of her family at her welcome ceremony.

my parish or helping others. In January of 2004, I asked Paul and Sarah if I could take them out to eat after Mass since I had something very important to talk to them about. It was then that I told them that I was thinking about becoming a Sister. Sarah and Paul helped me to start my journey and continue to walk with me in my quest to fulfill my dream of becoming a Sister.

Sarah works at a parish with Joliet Franciscan Sisters Dolores and Rose Marie. Little did I know that Sarah had been talking to them about me and my journey. Through Sarah, I was introduced to the Joliet Franciscans. Sr. Dolores gave Sarah the phone number of Sr. Barb, the Vocation Director, and I can say most positively that life has never been the same since. God not only planted the seed and nurtured it, but also planted people in my life to help me recognize His desire. I look forward to continuing to fulfill this desire as a Joliet Franciscan Sister!

St. Francis of Assisi, wanting to commemorate the birth of Christ in a special way with the people of Greccio, created the first Nativity scene in 1223. Here is the account as told by St. Bonaventure:



It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff. Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.

CHECK THESE OUT!

Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love by Illia Delio, OSF. This book explores Clare's deep desire to live the Gospel, helps us to see our own strengths and weaknesses and discover our own capacity for love.

Finding My Voice: A Young Woman's Perspective by Beth Knobbe. This author deals with age old questions such as: Who am I? Where am I going? How will I make a difference? What does God want me to do? Looks at discovering who you are as a gift of God.

www.catholicsoncall.org Catholics on Call assists young adults with reflecting on God's call. Through their website and the programs they offer, you can learn more about opportunities for service in the Church and how God might be calling you.

Luke 3: 3-6

John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one crying out in the desert:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.
Every valley shall be filled and
every mountain and hill shall be made low.
The winding roads shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

Questions for Reflection

- Who have been the people in my life, who, like John the Baptist, have shown me the way, led me to Christ and encouraged me? How am I being this “voice in the desert” for others?
- How am I preparing my heart for the coming of the Christ Child at Christmas? How will I continue preparing a place for Christ in my heart throughout the coming year?

Closing Prayer

Loving God, in this holy season I watch and wait with people everywhere for the coming of your light, Christ, the Prince of Peace. Like John the Baptist, may I be a herald of your good news to those who long to know of your abundant love and grace. May I grow in knowledge of you that I may experience the depth of your peace and your promise. Amen.

THE JOURNEY

“Where are you going?” I asked.
“To places I have never been,” was the answer.
“What do you plan to do?” I asked.
“My purpose will be evident at journey’s end.”
“Who has planned your itinerary?” I asked.
“Its plan will be revealed at times most unlikely.”
“Why would you consent to such a vague plan?”
I asked.
“I accepted the challenge when I accepted life,”
was the answer.

By Mary Eleanor Rice

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 10-16, National Vocation Awareness Week

Begun in 1976, National Vocation Awareness Week is a time to celebrate the call that we all have as Christians to proclaim the “good news.” We pray for the renewal and strengthening of all vocations in the Church---married life, single life, religious life, priesthood and the diaconate. By fostering a culture of vocations, the Church is strengthened!

Prayer Evenings, 4th Tuesday of Each Month

Join the Joliet Franciscan Sisters for an hour of prayer once a month. Prayer evenings are held at the Joliet Franciscan Center, 1433 Essington Road in Joliet at 7 p.m. on the 4th Tuesday of every month. Dates for the next few months are **December 22, January 26, February 23, and March 23**. Refreshments and an opportunity to socialize follow the prayer.

Discernment Evenings

The Chicago Area Vocation Association sponsors The Called Series, evenings dedicated to helping people reflect on their baptismal call. Evenings include prayer, speakers, discussion and opportunities for private reflection. Upcoming dates and topics are **January 5 — Called to Reconciliation, February 1—Called to Prayer, March 2 — Called to Service**. Evenings are held from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Cenacle Retreat Center, 513 W. Fullerton Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614. For more information or to register contact CAVA@archchicago.org or call 312-534-5240.

March 19-20, Chicago Area Nun Run

The Chicago Archdiocesan Vocation Association is hosting a Nun Run on **March 19-20** in the Chicagoland area. A Nun Run is a 24 hour experience of exploring religious life for women 18-35. Meet 4 different religious communities of Sisters; see where they live and how they pray. There is no cost but registration is necessary. For more information or to register, contact Sr. Jenny at 812-535-2897 or at jhoward@spsmw.org.



Artwork by: Sr. Kay Francis Berger, OSF

*May the joy and happiness of
Christmas be yours!
Have a blessed New Year!*



*Sisters of St. Francis
of Mary Immaculate*

1433 Essington Road
Joliet, Illinois 60435
815-725-8735 x115
www.jolietfranciscans.org

For information, please contact:
Sr. Barbara Kwiatkowski, OSF
Vocation Director
bkwiatkowski@jolietfranciscans.org