

Sister Maria Barbosa Will Make Her Final Profession



Maria das Mercês Alves Barbosa

Sister Maria das Mercês Alves Barbosa will be making her Final Profession of vows on January 13, 2018 in the Chapel of the San Damiano Institute in Aparecida de Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil. The Archbishop of Goiânia, Dom Washington Cruz, will preside at the celebration. Sisters Dolores Zemont and Rosemary Fonck will travel from Joliet to take part in the celebration.

Maria came to know the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate in Brazil through an invitation to join a vocation group that was meeting at Cristo Rei Parish. At that time, she wasn't even considering religious life. In fact she said, "I had no intention of entering. I had many doubts relating to God's will for me. I knew that marriage didn't attract me, but religious life was something new to me." Maria then attended a vocation fair and soon afterwards began meeting monthly with Sisters of the Congregation. After a year of discernment and with much counsel, Maria knew that this was the path she wanted to take. She wrote a letter of intention and asked to join the Congregation.

Though her parents are separated, Maria has always counted on the support of her parents and her ten siblings; five brothers and five sisters. "We are good friends and even when we disagree, we know we can count on one other." They are all very happy for Maria's decision to join the Congregation. "We are a family that loves one another very much!"

After her first profession, Maria took technical courses in nursing and began working in a Home for the Aged. She is now taking courses in physiotherapy at the University of Rio Verde in Brazil, which she enjoys very much. Physiotherapy helps restore movement and function when someone is affected by injury, illness or disability. "I believe that I am right in choosing these professions as they complement each other," said Maria. Her days are filled with going to class, working at St. Vincent de Paul Home for the Aged, participating in the Legion of



At a recent vocation fair in Brazil (Left:) Sisters Rita Lima dos Santos, Déborah de Castro Alves and Maria das Mercês Alves Barbosa.

Mary, doing vocation work and ministering at MST, an organization for the homeless.



Maria (middle back) is pictured with three of her sisters whom she loves very much.

While religious life isn't for everyone, Maria believes that it is a decision that must be made with much zeal, perseverance and fidelity. "It is a special gift in God's eyes... a decision that one makes with pleasure and without fear" she adds. Maria is looking forward to assuming this responsibility with great courage and determination – and said, "when (our Congregation first began) it was just Mother Alfred and her sister. Later we were many, maybe hundreds. Now is the time for each person who is still here, to roll up her sleeves and fight for this dream, which in the beginning was only one woman. Now it is my dream!"