

# Religious Sisters

## Is it for me?

- Do you want to live with women who share a common vision and have a common mission?
- Do you want to live in community with women who share the same Gospel values?

All Sisters, regardless of the religious order or community, have three main aspects to their lives. All Sisters are nourished by a prayer life, supported by a community and energized by ministry.

## Prayer and the Vows

Each Sister's prayer life is both personal (private prayer time) and communal. This life of prayer challenges sisters to personal growth and spiritual depth.

Every Sister takes at least three vows.

- The vow of obedience is aimed at listening as Jesus did in openness to God's will. Obedience demands openness to the leaders of a community in sharing one's sense of what God is asking as well as listening to the needs of the community.
- The vow of Chastity or celibacy requires loving wholeheartedly and inclusively all God's people. Sisters are called to be warm, loving and vibrant women. Celibacy is another way of loving. It does not allow for genital activity with another person.
- The vow of poverty means living simply in joyful dependency on God. Sisters are called to stand in solidarity with the poor, challenging structures that oppress.

## Supported by a Community

Sisters live or are attached to local communities in which they share faith together and support one another. Sandra Schneiders, I.H.M. defined the goal of community when she wrote in *New Wineskins*, "Religious should be on the cutting edge in the development of new forms of community life and organization structured by and for justice...Religious should offer a prophetic witness that it is possible for a group of people to live together in love and justice celebrating their own freedom and equality in the very act of celebrating God's absolute and respectful reign in their lives."

There are different types of communities:

- Monastic sisters live in communities in which they pray the Liturgy of the Hours several times each day together and often share a common timetable. They live in a monastery.
- Active Apostolic communities are usually involved in diverse ministries with varying schedules and meet to share faith as the community determines. The mission or ministry usually shapes the community life.  
Cloistered Contemplative nuns usually live in the same convent for life. Their ministry is to pray for the needs of the Church and the world. These sisters do this ministry within the convent grounds and often make altar breads, engage in art and music as well.
- Missionary Sisters are involved in bringing the Gospel to people in inner cities, reservations, to people in various needy situations and to the ends of the earth. Their community life is defined by the culture and mission in which they live.

## Ministry

Sisters are called to diverse ministries. Not only are sisters teachers, nurses and social workers. There are sisters involved in the arts as sculptors, painters, graphic artists, web site artists. Some sisters are composers, concert pianists, music directors and teachers, choir directors and liturgists. Some sisters are writers, educators, school principals and university administrators.

There are sisters who are doctors, gerontologists, hospital chaplains, lab technicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychiatrists, counselors and nurses. Sisters work in drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Other sisters minister as advocates for the poor, lobbyists, social workers, work with gangs, in street ministry and in shelters for the homeless, the battered and abused. Sisters are community organizers. Sisters are parish ministers, Directors of Religious Education, associate pastors and in some dioceses where the parish has no priests, Sisters actually run the parish. Some sisters are Diocesan Directors of Ministry Programs and administrators. There are Sisters who are lawyers and those who are prison chaplains and work in some form of detention ministry. Sisters work in retreat houses and some are spiritual directors. Some Sisters do retreat work full time. Others are campus ministers on high school and university campuses. The lucky ones are vocation directors! Sisters are engineers, agriculturalists, and architects. Sisters are on the cutting edge of ecological spirituality and its implementation on farms and community property.

Whatever talent a sister has, it can be used for ministry. Whatever ministry a sister does, all sisters are treated with the same dignity and respect. The money earned by a Sister goes into the community account.