

Blessed Theresa, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, reminds us:

“Prayer and fasting are two wings on which our hearts soar to God.”
-Letter 2780

Lent 2019

In the Gospel reading of the First Sunday of Lent, Jesus is confronted by temptations in the desert. He is resolute in his ability to say “yes” to God’s desires and “no” to those things that might get in the way of God’s desires (ill-fed hungers, power, false gods). As we continue to discern God’s call to each of us, there are obstacles too that can get in the way of us finding and acting on our discernment. Sometimes it’s enough just to name them...but if you meet a real difficulty, pray about it, and talk to someone about it so it doesn’t become insurmountable.

What can get in the way of discerning a vocation? (Part 1 – adapted, *How to Discover Your Vocation* by Fr. Stephen Wang)

- **Worry, anxiety** - *Trust that God is more powerful than all your worries.* Share your honest anxieties and put them in God’s loving hands.
- **Lack of trust** - You may have a distorted image of God. You may think God is like an absent parent who doesn’t love you, or a kind relative who will never make any demands on you, or a vengeful tyrant who is punishing you for something, or even an unpredictable boss who wants to force you into a vocation that will not be right for you. Instead, *trust God.* God is a tender parent who is both loving and demanding. God cares for you more than you care for yourself. Sometimes God may challenge you and call you to something unexpected – but it will always be for your ultimate good and happiness.
- **Noise, busyness, overwork** - Perhaps you can’t hear God’s call because you don’t make space to listen. Every hour is full up, and your mind is constantly cluttered with work, noise, music, and other distractions. Make space for God and for at least some moments of silence in each day.
- **Not praying, not living your faith** - We will never know ourselves properly or know God’s call if we don’t make space for prayer each day and try to live our Catholic faith.
- **Sin, worldliness** - If trapped in some habitual sin or caught up in a worldly lifestyle, it may be impossible to listen to your own heart or to God. Be honest with yourself; go to confession; try to make a new start even if you are still struggling. Lent is an opportune time to begin anew.
- **Addictive behaviors** - Alcohol, drugs, and even activities that are harmless in themselves like work, sports, texting, the internet, gaming, Facebook – they can become like addictions that cover up our deepest needs and cut us off from true selves. Try and break any addictive patterns of behavior you are trapped in – and if you can’t, then get help.
- **Avoiding the question of vocation** - If the question of vocation is nagging at you, don’t just run away from it. It will come back whether you like it or not! And in the meantime you will make yourself more and more unhappy. *So face it honestly*, in prayer and in conversations with someone you trust.
- **Fear of commitment** - We rightly value freedom but in the Western world we confuse freedom with being able to choose from an endless variety of options. Commitment to anything, let alone for life, seems like a limitation, even a loss of oneself. But to have a series of endless options is actually to have no options – because you never embrace any one of them with your whole heart. *God may be inviting you to make a lifelong commitment, to put down roots so that you can truly flourish, to build one concrete life rather than to fantasize about innumerable possible lives, to take responsibility for your own life.*

Next month: naming more obstacles to hearing and acting on God’s call...

Looking Ahead:

Stay with Me; Remain here with Me: A Lenten Online Interactive Retreat on Prayer

March 6 – April 20

Take time to deepen your relationship with God this Lenten season using reflection materials provided by Sister Sandra Weinke, SSND. Deepen your personal reflection and prayer by meeting weekly, by Skype, phone or in-person, with a School Sister of Notre Dame as a spiritual companion.

Contact Sister Stephanie Spandl, SSND, at sspandl@ssnd.org or 651-278-4498

Radio Show: Dare to Love

Next Airing: March 7

1st Thursday Monthly 8-8:30 a.m.

WNDZ 750-AM Chicago

Busy Person's Retreat

March 10-14

Notre Dame of Maryland University students and staff

Baltimore, MD

Contact: Sister Mary Kerber at mkerber@ndm.edu

SSND Women's Leadership Luncheon: Dallas – St. Louis – Milwaukee – Twin Cities

In 2019, the luncheons will focus on **human trafficking**: the causes, who is targeted and what is being done to eradicate it. Each location will feature a speaker who is knowledgeable about human trafficking and who works closely with those who have been affected by it. Attendees will gain an understanding of SSND's stance on human trafficking and what sisters are doing to remedy the problem. The luncheon is **free** to all guests.

- Milwaukee – March 7 Contact Madelyn Kempen at mkempen@ssndcp.org or 262-787-1036 |
- Dallas – March 19 Contact Sr. Bridget for more info at bwaldorf@ssnd.org or 507-217-0663
- St. Louis – March 25 Contact Debbie Rohrich-Tyler at drohrichtyler@ssndcp.org or 314-633-7032
- Twin Cities – March 29 Contact Sr. Stephanie for more info at sspandl@ssnd.org or 651-278-4498

<https://www.ssndcentralpacific.org/news-events/womens-leadership-luncheon>

Sister Theologians and Millennials

March 11

The Mary Louis Academy

Jamaica, NY

Miriam Dinner

March 12

St. Paul, MN

Vocation Jamboree

University of Mary

Bismarck, ND

March 19-21, 2019

<https://www.umary.edu/events/vocations-jamboree.php>

Visiting Women's Religious Communities

St. Paul, MN

Saturday April 6, 2019

Contact Sr. Stephanie for more info at sspandl@ssnd.org or 651-278-4498