

Vocation Reflections October 2021

School Sisters
of Notre Dame



Hermanas
Educadoras
de Notre Dame

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger:

Those who are free in God will always remain joyful and alive. Since they fulfill the will of God, they never lose anything but gain, even though, to all appearances or according to human opinion, they lose everything.

– Letter 2

What was the spark that set you on the path of discernment? Did you experience excitement and joy? A sense of hope and purpose? A sense of call? A deepening connection with God? Give thanks!

Whether you are new to discernment or perhaps have been discerning for a longer time, you know it is an ongoing process that requires honesty and authenticity, reflection, deep listening to self and others, and ongoing prayer, discerning God's call in "this" moment, leading to a next step.

New beginnings can elicit joy, excitement and hope, often effortlessly. It's natural after a time, however, for that initial energy to wane. Sometimes the demands of daily life get in the way. Maybe fear or self-doubt keep us from moving ahead. Maybe "analysis paralysis" keeps us from making a decision. We naturally desire the security of knowing we'll be successful before we even take that next step. Yet discernment and discipleship are all about faith and trust in God and our willingness and courage to take a step and live into a decision, even when it's not clear yet how it will all turn out.

Ask for what you need

If you're not feeling inspired, or are feeling unsure, you can always draw on prayer, and inspiration from others. A good beginning might simply be to pray, acknowledging how you are, and asking for what you need. Perhaps you can share your concerns with a spiritual director or trusted friend. The late author and prolific spiritual writer Henri Nouwen¹ offers much wisdom from his own lived experience, and continually reminds us of God's promise:

Dear God, I so much want to be in control. I want to be the master of my own destiny. Still I know that you are saying: "Let me take you by the hand and lead you. Accept my love and trust that where I will bring you, the deepest desires of your heart will be fulfilled." Lord, open my hands to receive your gift of love. Amen. --With Open Hands²

Who are your wisdom figures?

Henri was a wise spiritual guide. Through his many writings, he encourages us to enter into life fully, always accepting our own humanity while trusting in God, with confidence in God's grace and presence with us, every step of the way.



Our foundress, Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, was also a person of great faith who absolutely trusted in God.³ She wrote, "What the future will bring is in God's hands." She may not have known how the future would unfold, but she was ever faithful to the journey. She knew who she was and whose she was. Her whole religious life was a daily stepping out in faith with absolute trust in a loving God:

Love is the sign through which the world should be convinced that we believe in Jesus. (Letter 949)

I cannot describe my interior peace; now I am in Jesus; he may do what he wants with me and him I can trust. "Remain in me; I remain in you." On him I will build. (Letter 1)

Do not be afraid but trust in God and walk in [God's] way. Then the infinitely good and merciful God will be with you. (Letter 714)

Do not lose courage. Jesus will be at your side and help you overcome difficulties. (Letter 6)

Reflection #1: What or who are sources of inspiration for you? Perhaps heartfelt prayer. Or a scripture verse or the line of a psalm, or a song⁴ comes to you just when you need it. Or you have a new insight from something you just read. Maybe a walk in nature or a piece of art inspires you in a way that is beyond words. Give thanks whenever inspiration comes! Ask God for the gifts you need to remain joyful and alive as you discern God's call for you.

Reflection #2: Here's a little inspiration from Nan C. Merrill⁵

The hero's journey is not an easy path; yet great is the fulfillment:
Beauty honor, and love bestowed with the Heart Chalice.
Shed outmoded thought-forms; and embrace more life-giving, creative ways.
Reach for the stars! Dare to follow your heart's song!
You are the future of planet Earth; create harmony and balance within.
Love is the Conductor of our lives;
Be like members of a fine orchestra with all eyes seeing as One.
Keep your inner eye single, focused
only on Love; thus
will the Great Conductor inspire and guide the music of your life.
Then, whatever you offer in loving service, will be returned to you in full measure.

Lumen Christi ... Holy Wisdom

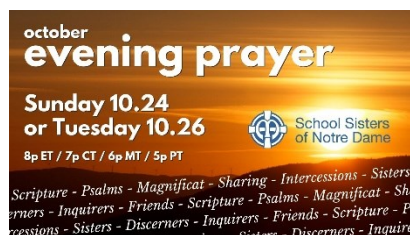
Closing Prayer

O God, I desire to serve You in all things, I want to be conscious of You always because You alone are the end of my desires. I will serve you constantly with joy, hope, and trust, because you are my joy and my help. Grant that I may seek You with a joyful heart. Amen. -- *Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger*

Did you know?

Each of our Vocation Reflections is available online at ssnd.org/become-sister/vocation-resources/.

Looking Ahead:



Evening Prayer with the Vocation Team

Sunday, October 24, 2021 or Tuesday, October 26, 2021

5 p.m. PT / 6 p.m. MT / 7 p.m. CT / 8 p.m. ET

Register for the ZOOM link at ssnd.org/events.

¹To learn more about the life and works of Henri Nouwen, visit henrinouwen.org

²Nouwen, Henri J. M. *You Are the Beloved* (p. 33). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

³October 24th is the Foundation Day of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. From humble beginnings, here we are, celebrating our 188th year, with nearly 2200 sisters in 30 countries!

⁴For example: [The Peace of God](#) by Scripture Lullabies (on YouTube)

⁵Merrill, Nan C. *Lumen Christi ... Holy Wisdom: Journey to Awakening*. Bloomsbury Publishing. © 2010, P35.