

# Vocation Reflections

October 2023

 School Sisters of Notre Dame

**Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, SSND Foundress, reminds us:**  
**The heart forms itself according to what it loves.** (Letter #3: September 1824)



## Let God Love You

*Because God first loved us, we respond in love, freely choosing to follow Christ.*  
(SSND Constitution, *You Are Sent*, C10)

Very often in discernment and in living out our lives of faith, we focus on our call to love God, to follow God's ways, and to love others. This is good and important. But very often, we forget that our desire and efforts to love God come from God first loving us. Although we often say we know that God loves us, many times it is followed by a "but," because deep down we really can't quite believe it. We easily get caught in the subtle and mistaken belief that we must earn God's love.

Spiritual writer and theologian, Fr. Henri Nouwen, in his book "Life of the Beloved"<sup>1</sup> wrote, "Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence...I kept running around it in large and small circles, always looking for someone or something able to convince me of my Belovedness. It was as if I kept refusing to hear the voice that speaks from the depth of my being and says: 'You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.' That voice has always been there, but it seems that I was much more eager to listen to other louder voices saying: 'Prove that you are worth something ...do something relevant, spectacular, or powerful, and then you will earn the love you so desire.' Meanwhile, the soft, gentle voice that speaks in the silence and solitude of my heart remained unheard or, at least unconvincing." (p.34) Giving us hope, he went on to describe his growing into that love, sharing, "Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply. It is like discovering a well in the desert." (p.37)

Discernment requires interior freedom and there is no greater freedom than when we truly know ourselves loved, when we experience deep within that God profoundly loves us as we are with all our gifts and limitations, that we truly are God's beloved. The following reflections invite you to taste again God's love.

### Romans 8: 38-39

*For I am certain that neither death nor life,  
neither angels nor demons,  
neither the present nor the future,  
neither heights nor depths – nor anything else  
in all creation – will be able to separate us from  
the love of God that comes to us in Christ  
Jesus, our Savior.*

### St. John of the Cross<sup>2</sup>

*You looked with love upon me  
and deep within your eyes imprinted grace;  
this mercy set me free,  
held in your love's embrace,  
to lift my eyes adoring to your face (Stanza 32)*

### Magnificat of Coming Home (Excerpt)<sup>3</sup>

*My soul proclaims the wonder of your friendship  
My spirit is weeping within me for joy  
My heart spills out tears with delight  
They mix with my joy and I tremble  
feeling totally claimed by your love.  
You showed me that your home was within me  
that living in me was your joy  
I wept still more tears at the thought  
of you in me and I in you,  
A dwelling place I am, I kept saying  
A home for the God of my life  
My soul has turned into heaven  
I am little and great all in one.*

## REFLECTION

1. What speaks to your heart in what you have read here? What draws you in? Is there anything you resist, a “but” that wells up within you?
2. Take some time to quiet yourself and breathe deeply. Imagine God looking at you with great love. Pay attention to what you experience without judgment.

### Quote Acknowledgment

<sup>1</sup> Nouwen, Henri (1992). *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co.

<sup>2</sup> John of the Cross, The Canticum, as quoted in Matthew, Father Iain (1995). *The Impact of God: Soundings from St. John of the Cross*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd.

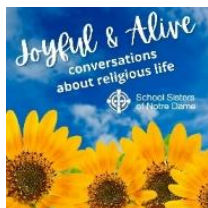
<sup>3</sup> Wiederkehr, Macrina (1988). *A Tree Full of Angels: Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

### *This month's vocation resource:*

Letting God Love Us: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/letting-god-love-us/>

## Looking ahead

Click the event title to learn more and register for the Zoom link.

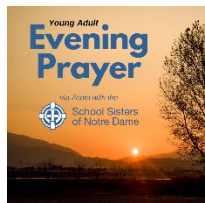


### Joyful & Alive Conversation

For single women ages 18-45

October 8, 2023

4 p.m. ET / 3 p.m. CT



### Online Evening Prayer

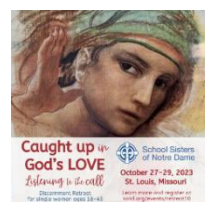
For young adults ages 18-45

October 24, 2023

November 28, 2023

December 19, 2023

8 p.m. ET / 7 p.m. CT



### SSND Discernment Weekend

For single women ages 18-45

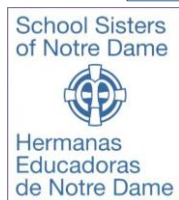
October 27-29, 2023

(Please register by October 16)

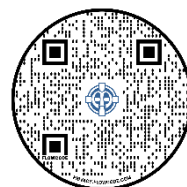
St. Louis, MO

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Stay up-to-date with SSND Vocations at [flowpage.com/ssnd](http://flowpage.com/ssnd) or scan the code below.



God's cause  
is the *only* concern of  
our hearts



*Vocation Reflections* is a monthly newsletter for those interested in learning more about discernment, prayer, and other topics related to the consecrated/vowed life. For questions, comments and subscription information, please contact [sisters@ssnd.org](mailto:sisters@ssnd.org).