

# Vocation Reflections

August 2024



**Because he loves us, God also gave us the ability to love him, who is worthy of all love.**

*Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, SSND Foundress  
(from Letter #3, written in 1824)*

## Freedom for love

By Sister Rose Mary Dougherty, SSND<sup>1</sup>

Discernment is ultimately about love. It is about seeing, in the moment, the loving action and compassionate action that is mine and having the freedom to respond and to act. The freedom I am speaking of is an interior freedom. It is often described as an attitude of total receptivity to God.



Julian of Norwich describes free persons as those who are “so attached to God that there can be no created thing between (their) God and (themselves).” **We recognize this freedom in moments in which our desire for God is greater than our desire for anything else.** This freedom is at the heart of who we are. It is not something we acquire; it is something we live into. As we come to live more and more in that place of true identity, we are grasped by Love. Pedro Arrupe, former General Superior of the Society of Jesus, speaks of this as “finding God, that is, then falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.” That love gradually determines all our choices. We begin to awaken to the invitations issued by love and are ready to respond out of authenticity of our being.

If this freedom is our true essence, why is it that it seems so seldom available to us? Most of us have a history of being separated from ourselves. With good reason Paul admonishes us, “Do not be conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2). I would identify the world as aspects of our culture, our personal histories, our self-expectations, and all influences that contribute to the formation of a false identity. We get glimpses of what this false identity might be when we observe our “unfreedoms,” what we cling to in place of love. Nothing need separate us from the love of God, but in fact, things do, because we try to make them God, we make the means an end. Often our attachments delude us into believing we are going for love when, in fact, we are settling for much less.

We get glimpses of our true identity as we claim the places of freedom in our lives, the times we’ve opted for love despite the risk. Sometimes our opting for love may seem very small and inconsequential in our eyes, but it is a choice to live into the freedom we have in the moment. We may not look like Francis of Assisi, Etty Hillesum, Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mother Teresa, but we are living who we are. We need to be aware of the freedom that is ours.

## For Reflection:

1. What speaks to your heart as you read the passage from Sister Rose Mary?
2. In what ways have you been “grasped by Love”? What were the circumstances in which that took place?
3. What adjustments in life may need to take place so there are less things you cling to in the place of love?

*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).*

## Prayer<sup>2</sup>

O God, I am allowed to love.  
It is a gift,  
It is a grace,  
to be allowed to love,  
to be allowed to love You.

I am able to love.  
You give me the ability,  
You give me the strength  
to be able to love,  
to be able to love You.

I want to love,  
It is my wish,  
my deep longing,  
always to love,  
always to love You.

Still, O God, I ask myself:  
How can I love you?  
How should I love you?

And you answer:

*Believe Me.  
Trust Me.  
Do whatever I tell you.  
Love your neighbor.  
And give me your heart.  
For whoever loves  
gives everything with joy.  
Love cannot wait.*

<sup>1</sup> From “[Discernment: A Path to Spiritual Awakening](#)” by Rose Mary Dougherty, SSND. Paulist Press, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> From “You, God: Prayer-meditations on Words of Mother M. Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger” by Theo Schmidkonz, S.J., translated by Anne Winkelmann, SSND, 1992.

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### This month’s vocation resource:

Check out this “Random Nun Clip” from the Nun’s Life Ministry podcast:  
“Talk to trusted people to explore call to religious life”

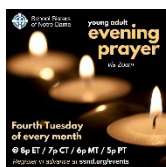
<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/talk-trusted-people-explore-call-religious-life>

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Back issues of Vocation Reflections are available [online](#).

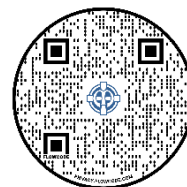
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## Looking ahead *(Click the event title to learn more.)*



**Young Adult Evening Prayer**  
For young adults ages 18+  
September 24, 2024  
8 p.m. ET / 7 p.m. CT

God's cause  
is the *only* concern of  
our hearts  
Blessed Theresa of Jesus  
Gerhardinger



School Sisters  
of Notre Dame  
  
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