


# God's Time

*Called to the Journey*



After making their perpetual monastic profession, Sisters Jill Marie Reuber and Kathleen Marie Cash chant the *Suscipe*, a prayer of complete giving of self to God and trusting in God's faithfulness.

## Back to the basics

### What is a religious community?

Religious sisters, brothers, and priests are individuals who live out their Christian faith as members of a larger group known as a religious community (also called a religious order or religious congregation). They make special promises to love and serve God for the rest of their lives, dedicated to a life of prayer and service. There are many different kinds of religious communities in the Church. Each community lives according to a particular set of guidelines which inspires and identifies them and gives a focus to their prayer and work.

### Religious communities in the Church

During the early centuries of the Church, about 1,700 years ago, there were Christians who were inspired by the gospel to sell all that they had, leave their homes, and dedicate their lives completely to God in a special way. They left behind everything so they could follow Jesus without distractions. Eventually, as more people

chose to live in this way, they began to form communities and live together in places called monasteries. As a community, they could help each other provide for their daily needs and work together to support the life of the whole community. Some religious communities were made up of all men, and others were formed by women.

In each community, the members lived a life of prayer and pursued a spiritual union with God. Ever since that time, religious communities have been an important part of the Church, and religious life continues to be a very attractive vocation for many people.

*Continued on page 2*

### In this issue

Sister Eileen  
Reckelhoff's story

Come & See Week  
schedule

Summer Social

Future Come & See  
events



# Back to the basics

Continued from page 1

## Prayer and action

Today, there are two main types of religious communities. Some religious communities serve God through meditation, prayer, and solitude. These are known as contemplative or cloistered orders. The men and women in these communities live in monasteries. Women's monasteries may also be called convents. They live away from the distractions of the world so they may devote their lives to praying for the needs of the Church. In cloistered/contemplative communities of women, the members are known as nuns. In cloistered/contemplative communities of men, the members are known as monks. The members of the community also work to support their communities by farming, or making and selling goods such as music CD's, communion hosts for Mass, or works of art.

The second type of religious community is active in the world, serving others in a variety of activities. These communities are known as active or apostolic orders. In these orders, women are called sisters, and men are usually called brothers unless they are ordained priests. These communities work both in the Church and in the world. They usually have a particular focus such as teaching in schools, caring for the sick, helping the poor, doing missionary work in far off countries, or working in the media. These communities also spend time in prayer. Their community prayer and common mission unite them.

## Consecrated to God

The men and women who join religious communities consecrate their lives to God as a way of seeking holiness. To consecrate something means to set it aside or devote it to a holy purpose. To consecrate one's life to Jesus Christ means to devote it entirely to Him. When a man or woman decides to accept Christ's invitation to leave everything and follow Him in a more radical way, they make vows to live like Jesus in poverty, chastity, and obedience. They participate in a ceremony where they make this commitment, much like a married couple exchanges their vows on their wedding day. They promise Christ they will live the rest of their lives dedicated to Him.

The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience help religious men or women to be free from earthly attachments and distractions. These vows help them to

live simply, to be more open with God, and to depend more on God. Poverty as a vow does not mean being poor. It means sharing possessions in common with the community. Religious men and women who live this vow only have things that can help them in their mission. Obedience is listening to and following God's will in one's life. This is done with the guidance of the religious superior. The vow of obedience also requires going wherever one is needed and giving oneself completely in service to God's people. Chastity for a religious sister, brother, or priest means they give their body and soul only to Jesus. Just as married people remain faithful to their spouses, religious men and women remain faithful to Jesus and do not marry or date other people.

## Where do religious communities live?

Religious orders may live together in a community house. Each house may include a chapel, private rooms for sleeping, a kitchen, a dining room, and community rooms for socializing. Some houses have guest rooms for visitors. A religious sister, brother, or priest is not geographically bound by the parameters of the diocese. They live and work wherever the mission of the religious community and the needs of the world call them.

## What if?

Let's say you believe God is calling you to a religious vocation. Maybe you read a story or meet a religious person that sparks your interest. There is a little voice inside of you asking, "Could Jesus Christ be inviting me to follow Him in this way?" You would want to find out for certain whether Jesus was calling you, as well as what steps were necessary to become a religious sister, brother, or priest. There are many different religious communities, and each one has a process for joining.

## Finding the order that fits you

There are many ways to find information on different religious communities. You can ask someone who knows about the religious life: maybe a friend, family member, religious education teacher, priest, or a religious sister or brother in your parish. You can look for more information on the internet or in magazines such as *Vision* or *Religious Ministries*. Religious communities also have "open house" days or weekend retreats where people can visit and learn more about the vocation firsthand.

## Back to the basics

Continued from page 2

Opportunities for visiting religious communities or participating in retreats are often advertised in parish bulletins, the local diocesan newspaper, or on posters and fliers found in your church. Most religious communities have websites which describe the community, provide information about upcoming events, and list the vocation director's name, phone number and e-mail address. Each religious order and diocese has a vocation director. Vocation directors help women and men to determine if God is calling them to the religious life and if a particular order is the right fit for them.

### Try it out!

When God calls a person to a certain religious order or community, He will find a way to guide them to the place where they belong. When a person feels drawn to a certain religious community, they contact the vocation director to learn more about it. Together they can arrange a visit to get to know the community.

The community can get to know them too. In this way, the religious community determines if the person is a right "fit" for them. If both agree there is a fit, then the person may move into the community for a short trial period. It is hard to know if you are meant for that kind of life unless you try it out for a short time. While living in the community, visitors experience a balanced lifestyle dedicated to God with time for prayer, community life, recreation, and apostolic work. It is a joyful, happy lifestyle for those who are called to be in a religious community, but the only way to find out if you might be called to this lifestyle is to try it out.

### Formation

There is a special process for those who want to become religious sisters and brothers which is called formation. Each religious community has their own formation program to train the women and men to be sisters and brothers. At the beginning of the program, there is a period of time during which a person visits the community to discover if they are called to join. During this time, a woman is called a postulant and a man is called a candidate.

If they decide to continue in the formation program, there follows the novitiate which lasts between one and two years, in which a man or woman becomes a novice. At this point, they are given the title of "sister" or "brother." During the novitiate, a novice learns more

about the charism of the community by participating in community life and apostolic service.

After the novitiate, if the novice decides to stay, they make temporary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are called "temporary" because they last only one year while the person continues training. At the end of each year, if they choose to remain part of the community, they renew their temporary vows. During this time they continue living and working as part of the community. They do this for several years until they are sure they are definitely called to this vocation.

After having determined over the years that a religious community is the right fit for them, a sister or brother professes their final vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which they promise to keep for the rest of their lives. Their years of preparation and discernment allow them to be absolutely sure this is truly the vocation God is calling them to. Likewise, during this period, the religious community discerns whether God is calling a person to join their community. If so, they extend an invitation for a sister or brother to make their final vows, and the person becomes a permanent member of the community.



### Questions to ponder!

1. What are some ways God can show a person they are called to be a religious sister, brother, or priest?
2. How could someone who is called to religious life discover which religious community is the right fit for them?
3. Religious men and women make temporary vows for several years before making their final vows. Do you think this helps them to make a lifelong commitment to a religious community?
4. What motivates people to make a lifelong commitment?

# Sister Eileen Reckelhoff's story

I came into this world on a farm near St. Anthony, Indiana, on February 11, 1945. I was born at home and am second oldest of six children. Growing up on a farm in a faith-filled family was good ground for nurturing my call to religious life. Prayer was a daily part of my young life. Mass on Sunday and other times when possible, going to confession on a regular basis, meal prayers, and nightly rosary as a family were givens.

In grade school and high school, I was taught by the Ferdinand Benedictine Sisters. They were kind, generous, caring, and interested in my well-being. When I was in the eighth grade, Sister Germaine Libs was convinced I had a religious vocation and wanted me to attend the Academy, so I wouldn't lose my vocation! I was needed at home to help with the work there, so that was not a possibility for me. I attended St. Ferdinand High school and upon graduation — without having lost my vocation there — it was a natural step to follow my call to religious life by entering Monastery Immaculate Conception on September 8, 1963.

Growing up in a rural setting with little contact with others outside my family except when I was in school, I was quite shy and socially underdeveloped. Coming to religious life was a BIG STEP for me, and as years went on, I was challenged in many ways to develop my gifts and talents. Before I entered community, my thought was to be a teacher though I really did not like school and numerous times in first grade, I feigned illness so I wouldn't have to go to school! Through

invitations and challenges from persons in leadership, I became an elementary school teacher (just one year!), high school teacher (French), vocation director (one year), director of temporary professed (seven years), monastery coordinator/subprioress (nine years), infirmary administrator and now pastoral care coordinator

for our infirm and retired Sisters. It seems God kept leading me from one thing to another, and I trusted God all along the way!

In grade school and high school as I was considering a call to religious life, prayer and community life were part of my dream because those are some things I admired in the sisters who taught me. God certainly knew where to direct me because I have not been disappointed. Faithfulness to communal prayer, personal prayer, and community life in its various aspects have been life-giving for me — and quite a challenge at times also.

Friendships I have formed in community are wholesome and supportive. Together we are on the journey, and it is the support of my sisters that sustains me in difficult times. I find God in so many ways each day. Nature has always been a way for me to find God. I tend a flower garden, I have a few indoor plants, I love to walk in the woods, I enjoy the sunrises and sunsets, and the brightness of the moon and the stars. All of these reveal God's love and faithfulness. Reaching out to welcome others in hospitality or in service to them, I also discover God. The frail and elderly are beautiful examples to me of God's abiding presence. I want my life as an individual and our lives as community to reflect so clearly Jesus' message that no one questions who we are and why we are here.



**Sister Eileen works with sisters on the monastery's fourth floor cleaning peaches for the monastery kitchen.**

## Come & See Week coming soon!

This summer we will be holding our annual Come & See Week, June 22 – 28, 2012. The theme is *The Discernment Journey*. The week is for women 18-40 years of age, who are thinking about religious life and would like to experience living in our community. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know us, experience our prayer and community life, and to talk with other women, who, like you, are considering a religious vocation. If you think you cannot come because of travel expenses, let Sister Michelle know and maybe we can help you out. Here is the tentative schedule for the week.

### Friday, June 22

- 7 p.m. Getting settled, etc.
- 8 p.m. Introduction to the Week, Ice Breaker, Opening Prayer

### Saturday, June 23

- 8 a.m. Morning Prayer, Mass, Breakfast
- 9:30 – 11:30 Service work at Monastery
- 12 p.m. Midday Prayer and Lunch
- 1 – 2:30 p.m. Tour, free time, conferences
- 2:30 – 4:15 Pool
- 4:15 – 4:45 Dress for Vespers
- 5 p.m. Vespers and Supper
- 7:15 p.m. Recreation – Community Room

### Sunday, June 24

- 8:15 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:45 a.m. Meet with the Prioress
- 10 a.m. Morning Prayer, Mass, and Dinner
- 12:30 – 4:30 Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Monte Cassino Shrine & Gift Shop
- 5 p.m. Vespers and Supper
- 7 p.m. Leave for Mission Houses

### Monday, June 25

- Mission experience and Shadow a Sister
- Vespers and supper on Mission
- 8 p.m. Return to Ferdinand

### Tuesday, June 26

- 7 a.m. Morning Prayer, Mass, Breakfast
- 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Retreat Day – presentation & prayer time on theme
- 12 p.m. Midday Prayer and Lunch
- 12:30 – 3:30 Pool, Prayer, Adoration, Walk, Conferences w/ Sister Michelle
- 4 – 4:45 Faith Sharing
- 5 p.m. Vespers and Supper
- 7:15 p.m. Visit home Deanery

### Wednesday, June 27

- 7 a.m. Morning Prayer, Mass, Breakfast
- 10:15 a.m. Leave for Holiday World (tentative)
- 9 p.m. Compline

### Thursday, June 28

- 7 a.m. Morning Prayer, Mass, Breakfast
- 9 a.m. Free time, Pool, Walking, Winding Down, Visit Gift Shop
- 9-10:30 a.m. Debrief Conferences available
- 11 a.m. Group debrief and Closing Prayer
- 12 p.m. Midday Prayer and Lunch
- 1 p.m. Depart and Clean up

## Join us for our Summer Social!

*Saturday, July 7, 2012*

*11 a.m. – 9 p.m. EDT*

### Over 35 booths of food and fun!

Country store, art show, over 40 handmade quilts, money wheel, musical entertainment, kids' fun and games, bingo, grand raffle, guided tours of the monastery church, and so much more!

Come hungry! We'll have chicken dinners, BBQ, brats, hamburgers, hot dogs, pork chops, walking tacos, baked goods, and lots more!

[thedome.org/social](http://thedome.org/social) • 812-367-1411

Indiana Festival License #126086



# Future Come & See Events

**June 22–28, 2012 (week) • October 19–21, 2012 • January 4–6, 2013**

- The weekend or week is free.
- Room, meals, and input are provided.
- Participants pray, eat, and recreate with the sisters.
- This is a chance to visit with other women who are discerning religious life.
- Your parish, a local Serra Club, or the Knights of Columbus may be able to help you with transportation costs. You never know — just ask!

## For more information or to register:

- Call Sister Michelle
  - 812-367-1411, ext. 2830
  - 800-738-9999
  - 812-661-9104 (cell)
- Email [vocation@thedome.org](mailto:vocation@thedome.org)
- Register online at [thedome.org/vocations](http://thedome.org/vocations).



## Contact Information

### Director of Vocation Ministries

**Sister Michelle Sinkhorn**

[vocation@thedome.org](mailto:vocation@thedome.org)

Facebook: [facebook.com/SrMichelle](https://www.facebook.com/SrMichelle)

Instant messaging:

AIM, Skype, and MSN: [sr\\_michelle@hotmail.com](mailto:sr_michelle@hotmail.com)

Yahoo Messenger: [sr\\_michelleosb@yahoo.com](mailto:sr_michelleosb@yahoo.com)

Google Talk: [srmichelle@gmail.com](mailto:srmichelle@gmail.com)



Mailing address:

802 E. 10th Street  
Ferdinand, IN 47532

Web address:

[thedome.org](http://thedome.org)

*Click here if you have a new mailing or email address.*

SISTERS  
OF ST. BENEDICT  
FERDINAND, INDIANA

*Seek. Pray. Share.*

### Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, are monastic women seeking God through the Benedictine tradition of community life, prayer, hospitality, and service to others. By our life and work, we commit ourselves to be a presence of peace as we join our sisters and brothers in the common search for God.