

THE PARENT'S STORY

We asked the parents of some consecrated women how they felt when their daughter wanted to become consecrated and what impact it has had on their family and life...

STORY 1

Mum listened to what I had to tell her. She was strangely quiet, but seemed happy. Her first response was: 'I have been quietly praying for you, that you would not choose marriage but become a sister!'

STORY 2

Mum went very quiet. I could feel that my choice was very difficult for her to hear and accept. Then she just simply said 'That's what I always thought'. Finally Dad spoke and with tears in his eyes said: 'If you think that is God's will for you, then you must go.' I thought that I was telling them a big secret, but somehow they already knew. Later on when I came home as a sister, Dad often accompanied me with pride as if to say - everyone, this is my daughter!

STORY 3

Mum was terribly sad when I told her what I wanted to do. Then she quietly said 'I won't put anything in your way but...' and her voice trailed off. You see, because Dad was no longer with us she found my leaving difficult to take. But on the day I received the sister's dress I was happy to see mum beaming with pride and joy.

REFLECTION FOR PARENTS

"I address parents as well. May faith and readiness never be lacking in your hearts, if the Lord should bless you by calling your son or a daughter to missionary service. May you give thanks to God! Indeed, see that this call is prepared through family prayer, through education rich in spirit and enthusiasm, through participation in parochial and diocesan activities, through involvement in associations and volunteer work. The family that cultivates a missionary spirit in its lifestyle and in education itself, prepares good soil for the seed of the divine call and, at the same time, strengthens the loving ties and Christian virtues of its members."
(Pope John Paul II, 22 May 1994)

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- To what vocation could God be calling your daughter? Could it be to Consecrated Life?
- If your daughter said 'yes' to Consecrated Life, how would you respond?
- Would you ask your daughter to consider Consecrated Life?

A PARENT'S PRAYER

Dear Lord,

You love our daughter and you want her to be happy, fulfilled and at peace. Reveal your face to her. Guide her choices.

May she grow to be a woman of wisdom, to know the vocation to which you are calling her; and a woman of courage, to answer that call.

Help us to encourage our daughter to seek your face each and every day of her life so that her life can be spent in your service, bringing love, hope and peace to the world. Help us to trust you with her fulfilment and happiness.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMON CONCERNS FOR PARENTS

1. We are concerned our daughter will not be happy and fulfilled in this way of life because she will give up marriage and motherhood.

By giving up good things such as marriage and motherhood, your daughter makes time and space in her life to devote to other good things. Although your daughter gives up expressing love physically with a husband she does not give up loving others and being loved. If your daughter is called to Consecrated Life it is because her heart is drawn to loving very expansively, beyond her immediate family group and she will be deeply rewarded and fulfilled in this way of life. And although she will not have physical children your daughter will be a spiritual mother to many people (including children). Consecrated women sacrifice the love of one earthly man/husband to be espoused to Christ, they make a sacrifice of maternity for many spiritual children.

2. Our daughter has a career she enjoys. Will she have to give this up for work she doesn't like?

When your daughter spends time discerning whether she is called to this way of life she will also be praying to discover which community God is calling her to according to the gifts and passions He has created in her. There are religious sisters who are psychologists, counsellors, teachers, lecturers, doctors, lawyers, hospitality workers, aged carers, writers and artists so there's really no limit to the type of work your daughter may be able to undertake as a religious sister.

Most of all she has an exclusive relationship with the Lord, a life at the service of His Church and His people, a life of total love, dedication, and sacrifice in imitation of Jesus. It is a life that is very rewarding on many levels as it is life lived in response to a divine call and gift, and put at the service of Jesus, the Church and the world.

In whatever community she joins, when your daughter is sent to a place to live and work, the community will seek God's will in light of her gifts. Your daughter's vow of obedience prepares her and gives her the grace to keep her mind and heart open to God's will as expressed through the community. Obedience embraced freely leads to great joy and peace in doing God's will.

Background: Little Sisters of the Poor
Photograph by Tien Nguyen
Left: Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity



3. There is so much in life to experience: will our daughter be confined to a convent?

Some communities are 'enclosed' which means that they choose to live in a particular place and have more limited contact with the world. In a radical way, they devote their whole lives to prayer, interceding for the needs of the Church and the world.

There are many other communities where your daughter would work side by side with lay people on a daily basis. She may have opportunities to study, live and work overseas, learn languages and hold positions of leadership.

4. What happens when our daughter is old or sick?

When your daughter joins a community, she joins a family for life. There will be younger and older women in her community who truly become her sisters and they will love and care for her as she does for them. They will also love, care and pray for you as part of their family.

5. Will she be lonely?

Your daughter will be part of a spiritual family which will love and care for her for the rest of her life. Her relationship with Christ will be a source of great peace, joy, and fulfillment.

6. Will I and our family ever get to see her?

Of course. How much contact you will be able to have depends upon the community your daughter is called to but you will be able to visit her. Many communities have holidays where sisters are permitted to go home and stay with their families.

7. I feel sad to lose my daughter.

It is perfectly natural to feel sad: you would feel the same way if she had decided to get married. But in making the sacrifice of allowing her to choose this way of life freely you are giving her the most wonderful gift as she has a whole lifetime ahead of her serving Christ and his Church. What's more you will still see her and be part of her life.



WAYS TO FOSTER YOUR DAUGHTER'S VOCATION

- Pray for your daughter's vocation
- Give your daughter stories of the saints
- Talk to your daughter about her vocation
- Watch films with your daughter which have meaningful messages about vocation
- Talk freely about your own vocation
- Encourage your daughter to participate in ministries at Mass and the Parish youth group
- Invite priests and religious to your home as role models for your daughter

If you have any more questions about Consecrated Life, or if you would like any resources to assist you, please contact the Vocation Centre:

Fr Michael de Stoop, Director of Vocations:
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Front: Dominican Sisters
Photograph by Vocation Centre.
Background: Dominican Sisters
Photograph by Giovanni Portelli
Top: Missionaries of Charity
Photograph by Giovanni Portelli

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MY DAUGHTER, A CONSECRATED WOMAN?

Information for Parents



“Parents, give thanks to the Lord if he has called one of your children to the consecrated life... Cherish the desire to give the Lord one of your children so that God's love can spread in the world. What fruit of conjugal love could be more beautiful than this?”

(Vita Consecrata 107)