

Reflections on a Franciscan vocation

Sister M. Jean Louise Schafer, OSF

“God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, He’s so good to me!” This may seem like a very simple song, but it is full of thanksgiving and praise to God. Contrast this with Gustav Holst’s *Oh God Beyond All Praising We Worship You Today*... Each has its place in the daily life of a Religious Sister consecrated to the Lord by public vows.

From early in the morning when our community prayer includes offering the day back to the Lord and our daily consecration to Mary, followed by the morning prayer of the Church in the Divine Office and our Franciscan blessing, to the most important part of our day, Holy Mass offered in our convent or the parish church, we praise God in all circumstances. We also make our commitment each day to live life for and with the Holy Trinity through the intercession of Mary, our Mother.

As Franciscan Sisters we frequently recall God’s gracious goodness in calling us to this vocation which is a fulfillment of our baptismal call. Each person God has created is called to holiness; to some he gives a supernatural call to the consecrated life...to live for God alone. St. Francis’ Rule tells us we “have nothing else to do except to follow the will of the Lord and to please Him” (#15). This self-emptying of our thoughts and wishes, this availability to do the Lord’s work in a common apostolate, this living in community is what enables us to live as brides of Christ.

When we pronounce our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience we do so for ourselves, but also for the whole Church. We are enabled by our vows to have a total love for God and his people. In our vow formula we say “May God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and the Holy Gospel help me”. The Gospel, heard, read, proclaimed and meditated, is the tool to live this life of God’s grace.

I have been privileged to live this consecrated life for 27 years now. Why did God call me and neither one of the other two girls in our family? Why did he call me and not any of the other 13 girls in my St. Lawrence Catholic Grade School class in Flasher, North Dakota? Why did he give me the grace to answer his call to become a Franciscan Sister? Why did he call me to the Franciscan Order when he called my two great aunts to be Benedictines, my aunt to be a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister and my cousin to be a Notre Dame Sister?

In the providence of God he has the answer to all these questions and I am so glad he called me to where I am! Presently the Dillingen Franciscan Sisters (commonly known hereabouts as the *Hankinson Franciscans*) number about 800 Sisters worldwide, with Sisters in Germany, Brazil, India and the USA. Here, our small group of Franciscans (our province numbers 30) live out the divine call to love and serve God and his people in the Fargo Diocese in various apostolates, namely education (Rugby and Fargo), healthcare (Oakes), care for the elderly and children (Hankinson and Grand Forks), an altar bread department (Hankinson) and pro-life work.

Together we help one another to grow in faith, hope and charity through living our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and the sacramental life of the Church. *God is so good!*

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