

## Carly's Vocation Column

June 1, 2014

### Give God the Glory!

Those of you who know me are aware of my religious Vocation and that, on June 12<sup>th</sup>, I will be entering a Carmelite convent in Nebraska. I have been asked to share a little of my special calling with you, but above all I wish to proclaim the wonderful things God has done in my life and will do in and through us if we stay close to Him and seek His will.

Ever since I moved out to the Peninsula from Ohio about three years ago I have earnestly been seeking what God's will for my life is. As a Catholic this is generally expressed in our call to Vocation either in married or consecrated life. I have since come to understand that our greatest Vocation is that of love. God is love. We are called, each and every one of us, to emulate Christ's love for His Church and to eventually participate in the Trinity's eternal exchange of love by giving of ourselves completely and selflessly to another. This is a desire that is stamped into the deepest recesses of our souls right along with the Image of God. Our call to human marriage or consecrated life is just a manifestation of this call to love.

Reading through my journals from the past few years has really shown me how I was seeking earnestly to give of myself in this way through Vocation. I can also clearly see how there was always that call to religious life although I couldn't see it at the time. It took a few relationships for me to start wondering if I could find that which I sought strictly in human love and relationship. I began to see manifest in myself a great love of God and the Church, a deep desire to completely give myself in love and service of both, and an almost irrational longing to spend hours a day in prayer!

About a year ago I began thinking that perhaps I was called to a religious life, and I made the decision to pursue it in faith although I was not, for quite a long time, absolutely sure that it was where God was calling me. This pursuit took blood, sweat, and tears and many hours on my knees in front of the Blessed Sacrament begging for clarity and direction. To step out in blind faith and to energetically pursue this was extremely difficult at times. Much had to be sacrificed, changed, and accepted, but, in the end, it is totally worth it. I look back and marvel that I was able to so relatively quickly come to a place, over such a rocky road, of complete rest and assurance in knowing that I have been led to where God wants me to serve Him. Could I have found my way, even begun the journey, on my own? Absolutely not! With St. Therese I can confidently say that EVERYTHING is grace, even the inner turmoil which directed me to pursue a religious vocation! Looking back I can see how God was firmly guiding me the whole time even if I couldn't perceive it, and this gives me greater confidence in His care for us. He gave me such amazing support in this church community, in my family and friends, good spiritual guidance through many sources, and He never let my trust in His providence down. Mary, too, has played an invaluable role in all this, truly taking the reins, guiding and protecting me with her maternal care once I consecrated myself to her and entrusted my Vocation into her keeping.

I marvel, too, that God has called – desires – me to give myself exclusively to His Son, Jesus, in this way. I realize more and more deeply that this is an incredible grace and that those of us who are called to this Vocation are truly blessed. To love Jesus is our greatest joy! The Carmelite Vocation, above all, is a Vocation to love, to be the heart of the Church, to go to the desert to seek and love God alone, to love Him in a world where many don't.

Many people do not understand the call to this life. I myself am just beginning to. I am told over and over how proud people are of me, but it is as I tell my family: it is just like I have fallen in love and am getting married! Truly! There is little difference, but there is EVERY difference because this espousal to Christ and His Church touches more deeply on the reality which human espousal is but a foreshadowing of in our ultimate call to union with God. I have been wooed by Christ, I have found Him whom my heart has always sought and desired to give myself completely to out of love, and now He takes me, His soon-to-be bride, to live in His house! How can there be any sadness or regret in my leaving the world and going to the cloister? I am as a





young bride awaiting her wedding day, awaiting the moment when she can give herself to her Beloved freely and totally and to join Him in His work and conform myself to Him. This is what it means to me to be entering Carmel. I have the greatest of joy, peace, and happiness! I do not know what awaits me at Carmel, but I do know that Jesus is waiting for me there.

So give God the Glory! In His love, goodness and faithfulness to us He continues to call men and women to enter into a life of prayer and service for the life, the good, of the whole Body, the Church, and for the salvation of souls. And we go because we love our good God. It is truly a great mystery! I hope my Vocation is an inspiration to all and a witness to the reality of the life of the Church and the Kingdom of Heaven which is among us and of which Christ is the living King. I want to encourage everyone, especially you young people in the parish, to seek God's will for your life, to stay close to Him in prayer and the Sacraments. I assure you, you will be the happiest and holiest wherever God calls you, whether it be consecrated or married life, and that there is nothing more fantastic and beautiful than to be called to give yourself wholly to Jesus and His Church. It is truly a grand adventure! Refuse God nothing and you will find the fullness of peace and joy.

I would like to end by saying what a blessing and a privilege it has been to be part of these parishes (Divine Providence!) during my journey. I can't imagine that I would have found such support and love anywhere else! Thank you, everyone, for your prayers. I would especially like to thank the Catholic Women and the Lay Carmelite community for their generosity in graciously helping me purchase a few needed books for my new Carmelite life and Fr. Nathe for his spiritual guidance. I am taking this whole parish community with me to Carmel and will always keep you before me in my prayers. Please pray for me that I may remain faithful to this Vocation.



In Christ,  
Carly Smith