



A Response to Love

In this issue, sisters share about their recent experiences of professing vows and preparing for jubilees.

COMING FULL CIRCLE BY SR. AGNES MARIA KILONSKY, T.O.R.

Jesus knows that I love full circle moments. This summer on June 18 I made my final profession of vows, and it was the greatest full circle moment of my life! As I reflect upon the graces of that day, I can see how everything in my life led to my wedding day with Jesus.

When I was eleven years old, I attended a vocations day for young girls here at our Motherhouse. My mom called to inquire about it, and Mother Della Marie, who was Sr. Della Marie at the time was the one to answer the phone and sign me up. When I came on that vocations day, I experienced a deep peace in my heart and a deep sense of being at home. This was the first time that I felt called to our community. On June 18, just about twenty years later, I placed my hands in Mother Della Marie's hands, and I professed my final vows in our community. Only God can orchestrate stories like these! During my time of discernment in high school and in college, I experienced God personally pursuing my heart. Even when I turned away from Him, He continued to pursue me in His love and mercy. I came to realize that my heart was made for communion with the Trinity. During the Mass of my final vows, there were specific moments when I experienced the love of each member of the Trinity.

Before I professed my vows, I lay prostrate on the floor as the bishop, priests and congregation sang the litany of the saints over me. For me, that was my moment with the Holy Spirit. I had experienced

my inner poverty in many ways during my time of formation in preparation for vows. I knew that I could only give my "yes" by the grace of God. That moment of laying on the floor in a posture of complete surrender was an experience of being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit like Our Lady was at the Annunciation. As I professed my final vows there was a grace for me in that moment to be aware that Christ was making vows to me as well. He pledged His covenantal love to me for all eternity. He has given His life for my salvation on the Cross. He has loved me with a reckless love, holding nothing back. "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

After I professed my vows, there was the sign of peace. Our bishop and the twenty priests who were present each came over to me and gave me a hug. Tears began to fall down my cheeks as I experienced the love of God the Father through these spiritual fathers who have shepherded me throughout my life.

The Lord led me to our community at a young age to show me the deepest desires of my heart and then He led me back. Professing final vows was a fulfillment of that desire. As religious, through the vows that we make, we begin to live heaven on earth. I look forward to the ultimate full circle moment when I am united to the Trinity forever in heaven.





BRIDE, DAUGHTER, SISTER, & MOTHER BY SR. ISABELLE MAINA, T.O.R.



A UNIQUE PREPARATION BY SR. BRIDGET SCHLANGEN, T.O.R.

Profession day was an incredibly perfect day. Everything seemed touched with a heavenly anointing! From the uplifting music to the presence of loved ones, the air was filled with a sweet fragrance. I was to be, as a dear Carmelite friend wrote, “the newest bride of Christ.” Filled with great joy and deep peace, I received the Eucharist during the first profession Mass. I felt as if I was receiving Him for the first time. In my heart, I heard His promise, “Our love will be fruitful” and I took in my new identity as *bride*.

As I feebly attempted to take in our Lord’s Eucharistic union with my heart, I had the welcome “interruption” of family showing their love through hugs and kisses as they passed by to receive communion themselves. They may not have known but their hugs and kisses were reminders of the “hugs and kisses” that my heavenly Father has for me each day. Through their tender affection, the Lord immediately reminded me of my primary eternal identity as *daughter*.

After Communion, I sensed the Holy Spirit’s promise to always help me to be faithful to my vows. I sometimes relate to the Holy Spirit as I would to a good brother - one who listens to my cry, who advocates, defends and loves me deeply. He always speaks the truth of the Father’s love for me and I can be totally myself with Him. In that moment, the Spirit reminded me of His filial love for me. He reminded me that I am to manifest this filial love to each person as I am their *sister*.

Shortly after my first profession, I visited family in Kenya. At a Mass there, I was asked to be the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. I distributed Communion to hundreds of people. I heard the Lord promise me, “Here is your daughter,” and “Here is your son,” over and over again. He was already fulfilling His promise of fruitful love! He who was now my Spouse was giving me hundreds of children to feed with His very Body. Afterward, I shed tears, feeling newly alive in the final piece of my eternal identity: *mother*.

As the weeks led up to my first profession of vows, I had an increasing spirit of anxiety and nervousness. The importance of this beautiful day weighed heavily upon me. Although the Lord continued guiding and supporting me, I became riddled with the unreasonable expectation that on the day of my profession and every day afterward, I would have to be a “perfect” sister: one who never stumbled or struggled with living the consecrated life.

My family arrived some days before my profession day and on the evening before the big day, we chopped up a large tree that needed to be removed from our yard. During this time of strenuous activity and comradery with my family, I felt all my nerves and anxiety disappear. I was able to take in a deep breath of fresh air and hear the Lord reassure me of the simplicity of living a life following in His footsteps. The Lord reminded me that He delights in how I uniquely live the vows and follow after Him. This delight is fulfilled in simply living day to day and moment to moment, whether the task is cutting up a tree, doing the dishes, ministering to others, or sitting at His feet in adoration. Regardless of whether the activity is enjoyable or not, I simply get to be with Him in it. I get to live my days with Him right beside me as my beloved Spouse.

I just have to chuckle at this uniqueness, for I cannot imagine many sisters preparing for vows by cutting up a tree, let alone the Lord speaking to them there. God is so good! On the day of first vows, I was able to put aside my expectations and simply be with my Spouse as I walked down the aisle and professed vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in imitation of Him! I am beyond grateful for this very joyous day, for having great support of many, and for the beginning of a unique and adventurous journey of living the vows with the Lord!



Sixty years ago I made vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the Lord for the first time. As I prepare for my jubilee celebration, I reflect on how faithful the Lord has been to me throughout these years, even during those times when my heart was not with Him as it should have been. The Lord has filled my life with so much good, with so much richness.

I thought of how He has protected and prepared me to be His own, even in my childhood. My nine siblings and I were raised in a small town in Ohio in a very Catholic environment. Dominican Sisters taught me throughout my grade school and high school years. My discernment to become a religious sister began as a young child. In 6th grade, during Lent, my teacher showed a film on the passion and death of Jesus. In one scene, Jesus was shown suffering on the cross. The narrator said, "This is what your Savior has done for you. Now what will you do for your Savior?" It pierced my heart. I felt like I was the only one in the room. That was the key moment when I knew I had a desire to give myself completely to the Lord in some way. My vocation was a response to the cross. I knew then that it probably would be religious life. I didn't understand it then but that was my thought. This desire grew over several years, until I answered the Lord's call at the age of 18 and entered the Dominican Sisters I had in school. After making first vows, I became a teacher and an administrator in several different schools in Steubenville, Columbus,

and Newark, Ohio and in Pittsburgh and New York. These were years of both blessings and trials. I learned many lessons about life and about what it meant to give myself to others in ministry.

In 1985, I began the master's program in theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville. I am so grateful to my Dominican community for allowing me to do this. It led to one of the greatest blessings of my life. After my first year of studying at the university, a position opened up for a residence hall director; I applied and was accepted for the position, which I held for four years. In those years, I was being renewed in my own fervor in living the consecrated life. I was also imbued with Franciscan spirituality. It was awakening parts of me that had not been awakened before. At some point, I became aware that God was calling me out of my Dominican community.

During this time, the Franciscan Sisters, T.O.R. was founded. I was attracted to the community's spirituality, especially to their charisms of contemplation and poverty, their strong fraternal life, and their focus on simplicity. After several months

of discernment and the help of my spiritual director, I began living with the Franciscan Sisters in January of 1991, received the habit in July, and made final vows in the community on March 18, 1995. This has been the greatest blessing of my life. I am deeply grateful for how the Lord has worked in my life in all of its stages. He has led me down paths I never believed I would travel. My life as a Franciscan sister has been very blessed and fulfilling in so many ways. The Lord, my Spouse, continues to call me in ever deeper intimacy with Him. The following Scripture passage is truly a reality in my life: "I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk; I will counsel you, keeping my eye on you." (Ps 32:8)



DEEPLY GRATEFUL, DEEPLY BLESSED

60th Jubilee of Vows

BY SR. JEAN DAUGHERTY,
T.O.R.



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SAVE THE DATE!

Our Advent Retreat will be held at our Motherhouse on **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2022.** More info. to come on our website and Facebook page!

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"To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love"

"GO, YOU ARE SENT!"

Our mission house sisters have moved to their houses and begun a new year! We are especially excited that our house ministering with students at Florida State will have four sisters for the first time! Please keep our sisters in prayer as they begin their new endeavors!

Santa Chiara (Franciscan University main campus):
Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Catherine Lynn, Sr. Joan Paule,
Sr. Eliana

Greccio (Franciscan University Austria campus): Sr.
Maria Clare, Sr. Sophia Grace, Sr. Lisa Marie,
Sr. Isabelle

Heart of Mary (downtown Steubenville):
Sr. Faustina, Sr. Katherine, Sr. Jean Marie, Sr. Maria
Teresa

St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Florida State): Sr. Rita
Clare, Sr. Agnes Therese, Sr. Mary Petra, Sr. Bridget

San Damiano (Parish missions): Sr. Anna Rose, Sr.
Mary Catherine, Sr. Mary Markita, Sr. Sarah Rose



SCHEDULE:

4:00 PM:
VIGIL MASS
WITH FR.
JOE FREEDY

5:30 PM:
DINNER

6:30 PM: DESSERT AND PROGRAM

You can join us in-person at our Motherhouse or through live stream. To find out more and to register please go to our website, to the "Events" tab and to "Share His Mercy Benefit." Registration to attend in-person is due September 9th.

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