

Process of Initial Discernment for Candidates to our Poor Clare Community.

So, you are looking into religious life? Moreover, you feel drawn to a contemplative form of life. You want to know Christ and enter more deeply into the love of our Triune God. You might find yourself attracted to St. Francis' spirituality, or to St. Clare, his closest disciple. All the while you feel a desire to give your life for others, do the most you possibly can to spread God's kingdom in the world. You see a life totally given to prayer as the best possible way for you to do this. If some of this rings a bell, God may be calling you to be a Poor Clare.

At this stage of your response to God's call there are many communities to choose from. If only the Holy Spirit could be more specific. We have a process in place to assist a woman in her efforts to discern whether she is being called to the contemplative life of a Poor Clare.

When you first contact us by letter, e-mail or phone the process of discernment in regard to your vocation has actually begun. You will receive some introductory information on Saint Clare, our Order, and our community, to determine if our form of spirituality is possibly the way the Holy Spirit is leading you. Age requirements are considered on an individual basis.

If you wish to look further into Poor Clare life you are invited to visit. At first, it might be a brief visit, or a weekend. This will give you the opportunity to share in our liturgy, to meet some of the sisters, and to talk with the Vocation Directress at greater length. If a woman feels God may be calling her here she fills out a Candidacy Report, which simply allows us to have certain basic personal information such as religion, citizenship, and health.

This will be followed by a required longer live-in experience, preferably a month, allowing the candidate to take part in our daily schedule, and further contribute to your discernment and ours. The requirements of each woman's job or other responsibilities are taken into consideration so that a convenient time for these live-in experiences can be worked out. This time spent inside the enclosure is meant to help her adjust to a different experience before she leaves her job and home. If her experience with us and ours with her are positive, and the woman wishes to take steps to enter as a candidate, the application process proceeds.

Once the candidate declares her intention to become a member of our community, she is given the Application forms by which she formally becomes an applicant to our community. These forms require more personal information. The next step might be an interview with a psychotherapist knowledgeable of our form of life, whose specific task is to help you discern your ability to live an enclosed community life, and to assume responsibility and cooperate effectively with others.

The Application forms require:

- A brief autobiography according to specific outlines provided.
- Reports from her physician, gynecologist, and ophthalmologist.
- Baptismal and Confirmation certificates.
- Marriage /Annulment records, where applicable.
- Three references from non-family members.
- Citizenship papers/ Visa status, where applicable.
- Disclosure of public misdemeanors, felonies, or confinements.
- Financial status.
- Behavioral Assessment by a psychologist of our choice.

Conferences with the Novice Directress continue all during this process as she observes and questions the candidate to determine whether she will benefit from our tradition of Franciscan spirituality and community life, and if the restrictions inherent in our enclosed lifestyle will truly be helpful to her human development and growth in the spiritual life. The educational level of the candidate is also determined so that reading material can supplement any areas where this seems beneficial to the candidate. Sufficient understanding of Church teaching is required, and also supplemented as needed, to assure a solid spiritual foundation.

When entrance time - determined mainly by the candidate - approaches, she is given a list suggesting clothing and other items that will be useful. No dowry is required in Monasteries of the Order of St. Clare, as all receive equally according to their needs and the possibilities of the community. The time of initial formation includes one year as a Candidate, after which time a vote of the community will be taken to receive her into the community as a novice, for two years, followed by First Profession of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience and Enclosure for at least three years. Whatever the candidate brings, whether cash or material things, is returned to her if she leaves the monastery. Once Solemn Profession is made, a Poor Clare trusts herself entirely into the hands of Divine Providence. She can no longer own anything; any finances and possessions must be given away.

To become a Poor Clare is to have nothing so as to gain everything. We need women who truly feel drawn to deeper union with God and are ready and willing to give themselves totally to a life of love and prayer for God's people. The most important determinant to reception into our order is that you are called by a deep desire of the Spirit; that you believe in God's love for you and are ready to give yourself unreservedly to that love forever, in a community striving to live the love and holy unity of the charism of Saint Clare of Assisi.

Contact our Vocation Directress for further information.

Phone: 617-524-1760 (7866)

E-mail: BostonPoorClares@yahoo.com. No sister has her own financial base.