



### **VOCATION STORY: Friar Reto Davatz, OFM Conv.**

I was 22 when I completed my bachelor's degree in psychology, at which point I decided to pursue a Master's in philosophy at a Dominican-run school in Ottawa, Canada. I was active in the spiritual life there, even as I digested the works of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. I was a border there and in my room, before falling asleep, the image of my celebrating Mass would sometimes come to mind, and I happily entertained those thoughts. Taking my cue from a favorite saint of mine at the time, St. André of Montreal-I had a great esteem for the Catholic priesthood and religious life as I understood it then. As for my enjoying the thought of me being a priest, holding up the host at the altar at Mass, I thought this a mere personal imagining of no real significance or potential consequence.

One day I mentioned these day-dreams (or were they pray-dreams?) in passing to one of the students living at the college whom I had known to have himself contemplated a vocation. He said to me that sometimes God speaks through our hearts in that way. I guess I decided that he might have a point even though, at the time, it seemed hard to believe, but I went with it and chose to periodically pray in the chapel specifically to know God's will in this area. After a certain amount of time had passed, I one day spontaneously, began thinking about the great distinction of diocesan versus religious or consecrated life. Is there one that I would favor, even just off the cuff? Yes, came the thought (or the inspiration?), the family type set-up of religious life seemed to make more sense for me at some fundamental level.

Then, down the line, I arrived at another such point where the question seemed an even more difficult one to my mind. If it were my call to live in a religious community, which one would I pick? But God was to pick it and I was to discover its fit. And so, it was that the Franciscan Order that somehow sparked something after I had gone down a short list in my head of major religious orders. In doing so I had thought that I might start by ruling some of the bigger orders out until I got to that one, barely remembered name of an obscure order/congregation where probably intended me to go. I stopped, however, after going through only a few names and got 'stuck' on the name *Franciscans*. Then, as I subsequently read up on St. Francis of Assisi and the order he founded, of which I knew next to nothing I found, I quickly realized that what I was reading seemed to fit me to a T (or should I say- a Tau?). I found a match and was ready to take this as a clear indication of something which I might have to take some sort of action.

And so, I pledged in my mind and to God that if I saw a vocation add posted somewhere, I would make the call. I was enthusiastic all along and more and more I believed that this was truly a dream come true: God's dream for me would be the greatest dream ever. Some weeks later, I saw a poster on a bulletin board in the church attached to the college where I studied. The poster advertised a weekend vocation retreat and invited young men who might feel a call to this life to visit the Conventual Franciscan Friars in Toronto.

It was actually the moment after stepping off the bus, after my return from the come-and-see weekend, that I got the loudest and clearest signal from God. It became clear in my head, heart and spirit that I had found my home and my family forever. For the next few days there were feelings of peace, of joy and of knowing I had just met my future brothers.

This last element had always been important to me. I had missed not having brothers as an only child. I had friends and parents who would talk to me when I was growing up but my brothers I was only to find years later-in religious life. Although, as far as I can remember, I did not have an explicit attraction to priesthood as a young child, I remember asking for a sibling very early on.

My vocation director would visit me periodically as I completed my degree. There was always great excitement for me in seeing him and anticipating the day that I would actually set foot in the friary where I would spend my two years of candidacy (now called postulancy and lasting one full year). My parents were to leave me there, 10 hours from home and in a new country (the U.S.) but that sense of the rightness of my choice stayed with me and never left. I loved the life and grew a lot in the challenging environment of fraternity and initial formation that were to be the next 8 years of my life.

If you are interested in the Franciscan way of life, please contact Fr. Russell, our vocation director at [vocations@olaprovince.com](mailto:vocations@olaprovince.com), [www.franciscans.org](http://www.franciscans.org), @conventuals1223 or 718-510-5822.