



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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**25 September 2019, 9:00 AM**

**Part 11: The vocation to religious life**

According to God's plan for our happiness and for us to transform the world into the Kingdom of God, some people are called to a permanent commitment in religious life.

Religious life is called the perfect state of life, not because people called to it are perfect, but because it is the most perfect way – easiest, fastest, most direct, with the least distractions – to imitate Jesus love.

Religious orders were started by a woman or man who was inspired by a particular spiritual ideal, or who felt called to serve an unmet need, like educating children, caring for the sick, or providing for the poor.

There are some co-ed religious orders, but most of them are communities made up exclusively of women or of men.

Also, there are different kinds of religious orders: monastic, like the Trappists; active, like the BVM Sisters; and missionary, like the SVDs.

Religious life begins when a woman or man enters a community as a postulant or candidate, inquiring into the religious order.

Membership becomes formal when the candidate consecrates herself to God by making public vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

As a state in life, it has to answer the questions: With whom do you live a shared life? To whom do you give the gift of self? For whose benefit do you serve?

A vowed person makes a permanent commitment to live first of all for God, and also to live for the other members in the religious order, as well as for people who are served by the members of the order.

A vowed person gives the gift of self in service, again to God, expressed especially in prayer and worship, to other members in the support of community life, and to people in need of, say, education, health care, or material needs.

A vowed person ordinarily lives in a community, praying together, maybe laboring in the same work, or at least pooling their income to take of each other and to share with the poor.

People sometimes say that property, buildings, and possessions that religious orders have are at odds with gospel poverty; on the contrary, that's what it looks like when people imitate the poverty of Jesus, which inspires them to share, pool their resources, and care for others, not just themselves.

Is God calling you to be a religious sister, brother, or priest?

Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque