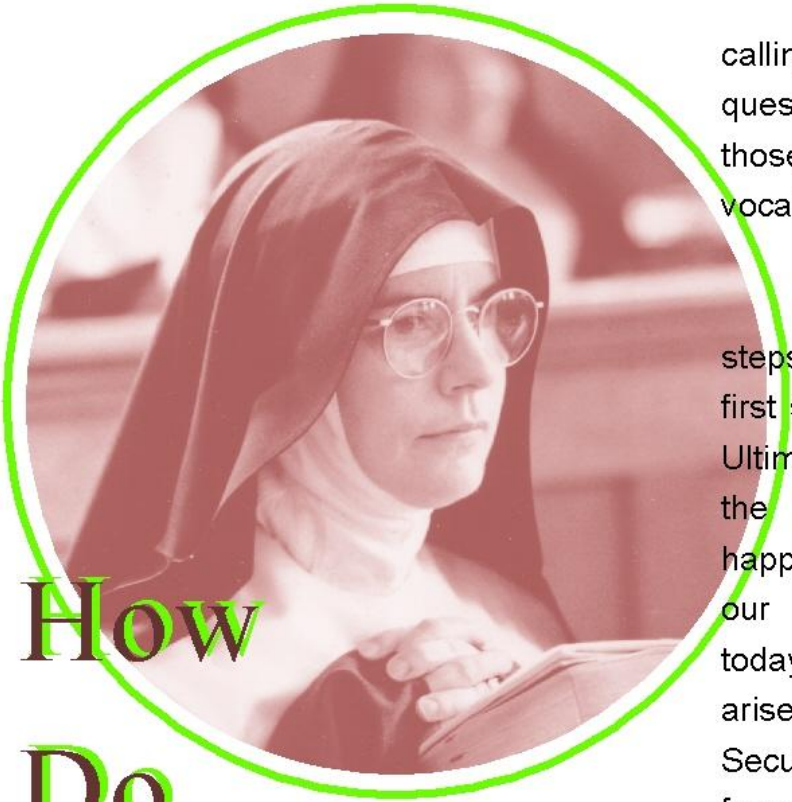


How Do You Know?



How do I know if God is calling me to religious life? This is the question most frequently asked by those who are thinking about a vocation.

Basically there are four steps in discerning a vocation. The first step is to trust your own desires. Ultimately both God and you desire the same thing, namely, your happiness. God speaks to us through our deepest desires. Our culture today does not tend to foster living that arises from our deepest desires. Secular society tends to keep us focused on the superficial and the passing. How do we recognize our deepest desires? These are the desires that surface in the quiet moments of life, when we slow down and reflect on the ultimate purpose of life. Do you feel an attraction to religious life? If the answer is yes, then the first step is to trust that attraction and to begin to act on it. Our deepest desires reveal the path to take, if we trust them.

The second step is to trust God. We only trust someone we know and usually it is someone we know well. The primary way to grow in trusting God is through prayer. This means praying daily and not just in times of need or crisis. As you spend more time in prayer a loving and trusting relationship will develop between God and yourself.

The third step in the discernment process is to investigate the possibilities. This means writing or phoning various religious communities and gathering informational brochures. Then take time to study the spirit of the different Orders to discover which match what you are looking for in religious life. After you have selected a few, make an appointment to visit the monasteries or convents. You will probably meet with a Vocation or Formation director who can further assist you in the discernment process.