

YEAR FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

Inheriting the Joy of Consecrated Life

In Chapter 2 of Luke's Gospel Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple to present him to the Lord, where they encounter Simeon and the prophetess Anna. Their enlightening words about Jesus amaze them, and now Simeon and Anna can finally rest because the Messiah is here. The openness and willingness of Mary and Joseph to listen to God is complemented by the lifelong fidelity and wisdom of Simeon and Anna. This image of different faith generations coming together reminds me of my own experiences with consecrated religious.

One of my high school football coaches was a religious. I had the opportunity to be around him frequently at summer practices through the fall season. Besides teaching and coaching, he was a war veteran, frequently ran marathons, and had all the qualities that inspire young men. He preached without words and he made a great impression on me and others. Beyond his work ethic, determination and toughness, he placed Christ at the center of his life as a religious and priest. His witness was so important for me and other young men as he showed us faith was an essential part of being a man.

In college I was blessed to come into contact with another religious order, the Benedictines. I had the opportunity to develop a relationship with some of the monks, whose way of life offered me some wisdom. I, like many other young people, struggled with making a commitment to a path in life. On the one hand, I felt I needed a career in which I could make a lot of money to be successful, while I also had thoughts of teaching and the priesthood. The monks showed me that being successful had nothing to do with money or having a career but in listening to God. They were men who visibly enjoyed life with a lifelong commitment to searching for the Lord.

As a pre-novice I was able to witness how important religious can be in the lives of young people. What was most striking was the appreciation and value religious had for the faith of young people. It is easy for adults to patronize their faith without recognizing the depth of faith present within them. On the contrary, these religious approached young people believing both had something to offer each other, just as the story within Luke's gospel. When a religious tells a young person "You are just as important to the Church as me, you have wonderful gifts, and you have a deep relationship with God," it affirms and emboldens them in their faith. Religious remind young people they are able to have a deep relationship with Christ, right now.

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