

Frequently Asked Questions About Becoming a Sister of Loretto

What do I do if I find myself thinking about religious life?

Not all women think about religious life so it might be the life path you are to choose. Don't be afraid to think and pray about it. Thousands of women just like you once thought about religious life. Some tried it and found the adventure of their lives filled with lots of joy and happiness. Religious life invites you into relationships, propels you across borders that divide people, and lands you into the heart of God. It is quite a journey! It offers you the opportunity to pour your life into the care of our fragile planet and its hurting people with other women who are on the same path of giving their life in the love of God and neighbor. Keep thinking, praying and searching – you might find the pearl of great price. The Sisters of Loretto will be happy to help you in your search. Link to Marykay@lorettocommunity.org.

Who joins religious communities today?

Women like you who experience God seeking them and who want to live the Gospel seriously join religious life. Ordinary women who love life and people, know how to laugh, and want to make a difference in a hurting world become sisters. There are no “typical sisters” but rather a diverse mixture of ages and personalities. Women come from various educational and work experiences, from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They have had various experiences in life but one thing they have in common is a desire to serve others, to grow deeper in their relationship with God, and to live their lives authentically in joy. Today's women entering religious communities are dreamers and risk takers. They dream new possibilities for the world and the church and are willing to risk what is comfortable and known for an unknown vision.

Twelve women have become Sisters of Loretto since 2000. They range in age from 30 to 60. Want to chat with some of them? Watch for our “My Space” link.

What attracts women to religious life?

Spirituality, mission and community are the three interwoven attractions of religious life. Women desire to center their life in God, live the Gospel, experience the strength and support of community, and serve God in serving others – especially the neediest of our near and far neighbors.

What are some of the requirements for women who feel called to vowed religious life?

Having a desire to grow in faith and to live the gospel fully, the potential for meaningful participation in community life, and capacity for working generously in ministry are important. In Loretto, we value the ability to show initiative, to dialogue, and to form mature relationships with others. We look for a commitment to social justice, a desire to live simply and a concern for the earth.

Do I have to be Catholic to become a Sister of Loretto?

You do. Religious life is one way that women can live out their baptismal commitment in the church. Only Roman Catholic women who have been confirmed are eligible to enter Catholic religious communities. Women who are recent converts may be asked to wait at least two years following their reception into the church before considering religious life. Communities, like Loretto, welcome women from other faith traditions into Co-membership.

What if I have been married or have children?

Sometimes women who have adult children that are no longer dependent on them for support choose to become sisters. Widows or divorced women whose marriage has been annulled often choose to enter religious communities. Each situation is different and is handled on an individual basis. Consultation with family members, especially children, is always important. While entering a religious community doesn't end a woman's relationship with her family, new commitments and responsibilities may present special challenges to families..

Is there an age limit or educational requirement?

Women who have at least two years of work experience beyond high school may apply to enter. Good physical and mental health, average intelligence, and recommendation letters are also required. Some communities do have age limits for women hoping to join. Loretto deals with age on an individual basis. Because religious life exists for mission, it's usually not a life one takes up in retirement.

What about my house, my financial situation?

Women can make arrangements for their property, possessions, and finances that will free them from being burdened by administrative responsibilities and enable them to enter fully into religious life. Outstanding debts must be paid prior to entrance.

How do I know what community to join?

You may not know early on in your journey. Each religious community is unique. Although there are many similarities and wide patches of common ground among religious communities of women, there is also a great diversity. It is a bit like buying shoes – one size doesn't fit all! You want a community where you fit in but are challenged to grow. When it is the right community, something in the depth of your heart says, "Yes, this is a good fit." Part of the discernment process is looking for and testing the fit. When it's there, a new member is able to thrive and grow.

How do I know if I have a call religious life? Where do I start?

We believe that each person has a calling to love and serve God. The discernment process for vocation to religious life involves prayer, reflection, gathering information, and consultation with others whom you trust. Visit with communities of religious sisters, check their websites and blogs, and participate in their gatherings if possible. Talk to a vocation director – a sister whose job it is to work with women who are thinking about religious life. A vocation director helps you explore different communities and meet sisters, look at your options, explore your relationship with God and helps you discern if religious life is your life's path. A good vocation director will walk with you, listen to you, challenge you, respect your decisions, and help you plan your next steps. Some women who consult vocation directors eventually become sisters. Others go on to make other life commitments with more confidence in their direction. Sister Mary Kay is the vocation director for the Sisters of Loretto at marykay@lorettocommunity.org

What about all my other questions?

Ask us! We would like to hear them and see if we can help.