

*Question 1: No matter what our state in life may be, we are called by God. Describe your personal calling; how you first heard God calling you and what was your initial reaction.*

1. When I was in high school, St. Anne's Parish started having Eucharistic Adoration once a month. Deacon Dan Crimmins who was stationed there at the time and who knew me personally through his involvement with the youth group and other parish ministries, invited me to "try it out" – I had never been to or even heard of it before. After spending time in Adoration a few times, I decided to commit to signing up for an hour each month. Doing so was a great blessing for me. I would go after basketball practice or a tennis match or whatever else I had going on and spend that hour quietly in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. As I was nearing the end of high school, my prayer, naturally enough, centered on the topic of what I should do after I graduated. I am blessed that my parents had really instilled in me the truth that God had a plan for my life and that, whatever it was, His plan for me would make me happy. I am so grateful that I knew this with such surety from such a young age, because that impacted how I looked at my life and my future. Even as a teenager, I sincerely desired to know what God's plans were for me and to do that. One month, as I spent time in adoration, I remember considering and speaking with the Lord about the idea of religious life. I did not experience a clear "call" at that time, but I felt that He was asking for my openness to His plans. The response that welled up within me was a peaceful and joyful "yes" to His desire that I would be open to the possibility of religious life. For me it was a great grace to know that I didn't need to frantically try to find the right community or enter a convent immediately. He wasn't asking that of me. The Lord just wanted me to keep my heart open and to follow His lead. It wasn't up to me, it was up to Him, and that really took the pressure off! I experienced His goodness and care in the ways He was meeting me where I was and gently showing me the steps I should take; however, there was also something agonizing about the discernment process and so I also felt impatient at times, wanting to "really know" what the Lord's plans were for me.

*Question 2: For many, first hearing the call did not necessarily incite an immediate response. Describe when and how you answered the call.*

2. I went on to study civil engineering in college, a subject I was, and still am, very interested in. During my years in college, I often prayed to know the Lord's plans for my life. I became aware that I had a sincere desire for the religious life and that desire grew over time. I was blessed to be able to have the support of a spiritual director who really helped me to grow in

my relationship with Jesus during those years. Another key for me was that a priest who was a friend of mine encouraged me to visit a convent and spend time with sisters as a practical step to help my discernment be a bit more concrete. As obvious as this might seem, I am grateful that he said it because taking that step was not easy. I ended up going to visit our sisters for a “Come and See” weekend and this was when I received a real clarity that this was what God had made me for, and I was filled with joy. What was it? For me it was the beauty and simplicity of their radical Gospel life. The sisters had given up everything they had and now owned nothing, yet they were filled with joy. They lived simply, together, in community life – like family to one another, taking turns cooking the meals and doing chores. They served the poor and shared the love of God with them and everyone. When St. Francis of Assisi first began to live this way of life he cried out, “This is what I want, this is what I seek, it’s what I desire with all my heart.” That is how I felt too. This is what God made me for – this was His plan for my life! I was eager to enter the convent right away at that point, but that wasn’t the Lord’s plan. I ended up finishing my engineering degree and growing a lot through those years. After I graduated from college, I entered the Community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal in September of 2008.

*Question 3: We are all pilgrims on a journey. At this moment in time, where are you on your vocational journey?*

3. Of course, my story doesn’t end with entering the convent. After three years with the sisters, I made my first profession of vows on September 17, 2011. Then, 5 years later, I made my final profession of vows on June 6, 2016. Currently, I am living in Ireland at St. Anthony Convent, where I have been for the last 4 years, at our mission in Drogheda (just a bit north of Dublin). I love being a sister, it is a privilege and a gift, though not without its challenges, too! It is a privilege to wear the Franciscan habit and be a visible witness of God’s presence in the world, to everyone. It is a gift to live a life of deep prayer (we have at least 5 hours of prayer everyday), and to be constantly seeking to go deeper in my relationship with the Lord. It is a challenge because the Lord desires me to be deeply and completely united to Him, and so He is constantly helping me to see and work on the things in me that are not there yet... There is a long way to go, but that is not the point. All that He’s really wanting of me (and you) is that I choose to follow Him each and every day, wherever He may lead.