

VOCATION DISCERNMENT >newsletter

DAUGHTERS of CHARITY
OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL



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Passing the Baton

by Sister Michelle Hoffman, D.C.

As I was transitioning to the seminary (novitiate), the Olympics were just getting started. I couldn't help but think of the 4 x 100 relays and passing the baton on to the next runner as a great analogy for my time of transition from postulancy to seminary. While I was packing up all of my belongings and reflecting on my wonderful year in Philadelphia, so too, was Kate McFall packing her belongings. Kate was heading to Philadelphia to begin her own time as a pre-postulant.



Our new Seminary Sisters! Sister Michelle Hoffman, D.C., (left) and Sister Kara Davis, D.C., pose for a picture after mass of incorporation.

For me, the baton is the passing on of the Vincentian tradition. It is the joy of finding your place in this world, where the world's deep hunger and your great happiness meet.

Transitions are not always easy. There is excitement and an uneasy feeling, but knowing that the baton was passed to me and now I get to pass it on, makes the transition time smoother. I know others who have walked the same path. I am grateful for my time as a pre-

postulant and postulant and all of the Daughters who have passed on the baton and entrusted me with such a long-lasting and beautiful tradition. Just as Vincent and Louise passed the baton on to the first Confreres and Daughters, so too, I hope to cultivate the Vincentian tradition everyday and pass along the baton.

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The Shoes You Choose

by Sister Kara Davis, D.C.

As I was preparing to enter the seminary, folks often asked me if I was nervous or excited, or what I found to be difficult or easy about the transition. Typically, I would tell people that the most difficult part of preparing for seminary was choosing the right pair of shoes. As materialistic as that might sound, it is the truth. I anguished over finding the perfect pair of shoes: the most functional, the most comfortable, the most durable, and just the right shade of navy blue. I would be wearing these shoes practically everyday and I wanted a pair that could walk in the park as well as genuflect at mass. The more I scrolled through websites of shoes on the internet, the more I realized that this obsession was not about shoes at all.

Just as there are fifty million different pairs of shoes—different colors, styles, and purposes—there are fifty million ways to live out our vocation to love. With all the different religious communities out there, or even men to marry, how do I know that becoming a Daughter of Charity is the right fit? Thankfully, I have been trying on this pair of shoes for about two years now and I have found that, though it might have taken a little time to get my feet comfortable in the shoes, this choice provides the best support and foundation for my walk with Christ.

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Sister Kara Davis, D.C., signs her name during incorporation.

upcoming events

Register online at <http://daughters-of-charity.com/retreats>

Come & See

October 7-9 in Los Altos Hills, CA **AND** Emmitsburg, MD

Online Discernment Retreat

September 25-29 **AND** December 4-8

Chicago's Got Sisters!

October 7-9, 2016 in Chicago, IL

Alpha & Omega—Beginning & End—Seminary & Infirmary

by Sister Lisa Laguna, D.C.

So often, women in discernment want to know what this “seminary” thing is all about. What happens in the Daughters of Charity Seminary? What is expected of a seminary sister? Oh, and by the way, why is it called a seminary and not a novitiate?

These are important to answer.

1) In the Daughters of Charity Seminary, sisters are set apart for a special time of formation. They spend time studying the history and charism of the community and our founders. Emphasis is placed on immersing themselves in the prayer life of a Daughter of Charity. They join others in formation with different communities for workshops and classes about consecrated life, vows, spirituality, and human development. Seminary sisters also spend one day a week ministering with those who are poor. This is a thumbprint of the seminary.

2) A seminary sister is expected to fully engage in her life as a Daughter of Charity, to learn to pray as a sister, serve as a sister, and live a rich community life as a sister.

3) We call it the seminary and not novitiate because, when we were formed in 1633, all communities of women were cloistered. St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de

Marillac wanted us to serve the poor. So, they were careful to distinguish us from “nuns.” That included the vocabulary used to describe our life. We don’t have local superiors, we have sister servants. We live in houses, not convents. We are seminary sisters, not novices.

Now, to get to the heart of the seminary. One of the most precious opportunities that we are given in the seminary is time to visit with our elderly and infirmed sisters. Each week, time is set aside for that very purpose. You see, there is something so sacred and holy about journeying with those who have blazed the trails before us. There is something so

Sister Truc Nguyen, D.C., and Sister Annette LeDuc, D.C., visit and pray together.



wonderful about the future and the past meeting up and having a weekly chat—sharing ideas about our lives as Daughters of Charity, hearing stories of life on the mission, talking about dreams realized and those yet to be conceived, the beginning and the end—over and over. It has been happening for almost 400 years.

As I write this article, one of our sisters in California has made her way home to God. For many years, Sister Mary Genevieve Moonier, D.C., was the seminary directress for the Province of the West. She was legendary. Yet, she was called home in the same way as any Daughter of Charity. We took turns visiting her, praying with and for her, singing Marian songs, and soaking in the presence of God that exists in that space between heaven and earth that is so thin at the time of our dying. It is holy ground, with unstrapped sandals we stayed.

The sisters who were formed under her are all living in that amazing place, too—joyfully remembering the beginning, grieving the end, and with hope celebrating forever.

The Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end. The seminary, infirmary, mission, and then heaven.

Dear Discerners,

The colors of fall thrill us with the beauty and creativity of God! They also are a reminder that the trees and nature around us form a circle and things will re-emerge at the end of the fall and winter with new and vibrant life yet again! Our newest members are taking time out to be in the seminary, to pray and learn and be strengthened in their new lives as Daughters of Charity. As you have read, it is a time of beginnings and of endings. Sisters Michelle and Kara both write about their transition to seminary and their excitement to begin their lives as Daughters. But not without some loss as they move from familiar places and people to this new and exciting life as a Sister. Pray for them on this journey, just as they—and all of us—pray for you at whatever leg of the vocation journey you find yourself! There are many beginnings and endings, just as our seasons remind us! As you read about the “passing of the baton,” the foundation of a good pair of shoes, and the meeting of the future and the past to “share dreams realized and those yet to be conceived”, we hope you will understand a little better about who we are as Daughters of Charity.

May God bless your beginnings & endings, your hopes & dreams, your journey along the way of discernment!

Sister Mary Fran, Sister Lisa, Sister Theresa, Sister Virginia Ann, Sister Patricia, Sister Kathy

from the directors