



MISSION DISCERNMENT

You've got questions ?

Facing our Fears

Questions

What about the relationships in my life?

How do I overcome doubts?

Yes, I'm afraid of taking a step like this one!

It's a common thing for all of us to meet young people who express their interest in religious life or priesthood, but they held back by their fears. These fears are very real, that are rooted on deep concerns, while others are just plain "*myths.*"

Let's name these anxieties in our hearts, and try to discover their weight on our decisions.

Fear of Disappointing Others

Disappoint parents, family and friends should they not become ordained or professed. In this case there is a need for an open dialogue about their vocation quest and an honest discernment. Never exploring the vocation question would probably be more disappointing.

Fear of Uncertainty

Often people are not 100% sure of a vocation decision, so they can't act on it. But no one has to be completely sure just to investigate a church vocation. If the missionary life has been a gut question over a period of time, it's worth exploring. If others agreed that a church vocation seems fitting, all the more reason to step forth. The degree of certainty becomes more important as people move through and near the end of the formation years

Fear of Loneliness

One of the most common fears concerns loneliness and family matters with regard to celibacy. It's important to realize that loneliness touches everyone and every lifestyle. There are many lonely couples and many lonely families. Loneliness results more from internal circumstances than from external. If people are insecure, they'll be lonely regardless of how many people may be around them. In terms of having or being part of a family, missionaries and religious experience a sense of belonging to support

groups and communities that regularly for prayer, sharing and encouragement. Church ministry opens up so many opportunities of family experiences with the people we serve.

Fear of Insufficient Funds

Formation for a missionary religious life requires considerable funds and resource, and rightly many wonder "How can I afford it?" Religious communities do ask for contribution and self-financial support during College studies, but scholarships and loans are available to help people financially during their discernment and formation process. This is possible through the generous support we receive from friends and benefactors. If there is a financial problem, you need to share it with the Vocation minister.

Fear of Being Tied Down

They will be too tied down in life. They assume they wouldn't have the chance to visit their families or friends, gain further education, change services, etc. This is not quite the case for missionary life: we do visit our relatives regularly; we encourage further studies and specializations; we are open to always-new ministries. All this, of course, is planned together with the community as it responds to the real needs of its missionary service.

Fear of Academic Studies

Sometimes young people worry about whether they can handle the studies involved in a vocation. Honestly, it is not as difficult as it appears: with average intelligence and a willingness to work, people can master the studies. Also, formation programs leading to the priesthood or religious life look not only at the academic ability, but also at spirituality, relational skills, emotional and psychological development, ministry experiences, and more. Academic ability is only one aspect of the formation process.

Fear of Living without Possessions

"Can I live without the wealth and material possessions I could have from any other job and profession?" This fear might sound selfish, but it's very real. For us, religious missionaries (priests and brothers), we do put everything in common. We share property, wages, donations, means, etc. By the same token, however, all we need for our well-being and of our missionary work is provided for by the community through the same common fund. Therefore food, housing, medicines, relaxations, travels, and everything else is made possible by our sharing of our resources. We share what we have, and what we need.

Fear of Unhappiness

"Will I be happy?" is a key question for many considering a church vocation. We may look at how we achieved happiness in the past: when was I happy? Who or what made me happy? If we see that we need a lot of external rewards to be happy, then we may not be satisfied in religious missionary life. On the other hand, if helping others – especially helping others in their faith journey – is rewarding and energizing, then religious missionary life will bring happiness. We have also to keep in mind that people will experience years during which they'll test this out, especially living at our formation communities before making any permanent commitment. People will find out if this is the place and lifestyle for them

through prayer, service, and every day community life. How would we really know if we would be happy in a particular lifestyle and ministry if we don't give ourselves a chance to look into it?

Fear of "Not having what it takes"

"Do I have what it takes?" Many candidates to religious missionary life wonder if they have the qualities and skills needed for this life. The discernment process will help them answer also this question. Through reflection, reading, prayer, and actually meeting and talking with people who are missionaries, will be a very enlightening and enriching experience, regardless of the final decision.

(adapted from an article by Fr. Dan Guenther)

"But just when I thought things could not get any worse, I saw God... It was a sudden Grace that gripped my heart and thought"

Fr. Carl



"The Good Shepherd abandons the 99, and goes in search of the Lost Sheep [by Antonella del Grosso, xmm]