

SO YOUR DAUGHTER WANTS TO ENTER THE CONVENT?

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Your daughter wants to enter religious life and you suddenly find yourself thinking, "Why couldn't I have the normal problems folks have with daughters like too much sex, drugs, or spending? Why does my daughter want to become a --- gulp --- nun?!"

Our daughter entered the convent eight years ago, right out of high school at the age of seventeen. She is now finally professed which means she's a full fledged nun. And she couldn't be happier. But I remember life when she was discerning her vocation. I know what you are thinking. As parents, we want our children to find happiness and success. If God is calling your daughter to enter religious life, that is where she will find her happiness. That is where she will experience success. This happens because she'll be following God's Will.

But how do you know if it's God's Will that your daughter become a nun? You may not know. She is the one who has to discern that call. The convent or Order she is planning to enter will help her. They will want to accept only those women whom they feel are suited to the vocation of that convent or Order. If the superiors feel that your daughter is immature or undecided, they will want her to take more time to discern before she enters religious life. A woman in a convent, who ought not be there, is a source of stress and discomfort for everyone else. The convent won't accept her if she won't do well in it.

You probably have a good many thoughts and concerns. Many parents do. Here are some common ones.

I'll never have grandkids.

On the contrary, you will have many grandkids. All those your daughter brings to life in Christ are your grandkids. You may not be able to hold them on your knee, but even the ones you hold on your knee grow up. People will get to know Christ because your daughter knew Him first. God be praised!

I'm losing her forever.

Not at all. You can call, visit, write. You aren't losing a daughter. You're gaining a convent of other women, some of whom will become very close to you. If your daughter married or took a job in a distant city or nation, you would not see her often. But would you forbid her to go where her job or spouse took her?

She's throwing her life away.

A career doesn't have to be in the professional world. Most folks don't call ministering to others through work, counsel, and prayer "throwing your life away." That's the work nuns do. Think of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Did she throw her life away or waste her talents? Didn't she rather use them to help many poor people who would have been otherwise overlooked?

She's too young to know what she's doing.

You may see your daughter as immature, but she may appear differently to a religious Order. The superiors in the Order or convent are looking for spiritual maturity. They will not accept your daughter if she is, in fact, immature. In addition, if your daughter is eighteen, she's legally an adult. She can make her own decisions, just like you did when you were eighteen.

She never made good decisions.

The last thing nuns want is someone in the convent who doesn't want to be there, who is unstable, indecisive, changeable, troublesome, or doesn't fit in. If she's not making a good decision, the nuns will send her packing. Not to worry.

She's always been a fanatic.

Just about every good thing was begun or continued by a fanatic. You're a fanatic, too, about some things. What are they? Cleaning? Sports? Foods? Your daughter is fanatical about God. Who better to be fanatical about?

If she changes her mind later, she'll be too old to find a husband.

If God wants her to find a husband, she'll find one. And, if He doesn't, why in the world would she want to marry? Many women are quite fulfilled as singles. Not to worry.

All those women in one house with no man--it's not safe!

Nuns are not stupid. Some have big dogs or burglar alarms. Your daughter will be safe.

Once those nuns brain wash her, she'll never be able to leave.

Brain washing belongs to prisons. Your daughter is free to leave at any time.

She'll regret this when she gets older.

If she does not enter religious life, she may well regret that all her life.

I'll miss her terribly.

Yes, you will. This can be compounded if she is your only daughter or maybe your only child. But you would miss her if she married, too, or moved away. It will be difficult, yes, but you will survive because you will know that your daughter is in a convent or Order where she is loved, accepted, and following God's Will for her life. In the face of her joy, you will eventually rejoice with her.

Can we send her money? Do we write her out of our will? Will she have enough to eat? How can she live that way when she is so used to having so much?

Certainly you can send her money. You need not write her out of your will. And she will have plenty to eat. Any money given to your daughter will go to the convent or Order, but she will, of course, benefit from it. Nuns usually have many benefactors. Your daughter will be well cared for. In your home, she probably had excess. Now she will have just enough. She won't be destitute. She will be free of the encumbrances that come with having more than you need.

Why can't she just go to college first? If she has a vocation, it will still be there when she graduates.

Some Orders require that their candidates have a college education or work experience before entering. Others allow the candidate to enter upon graduation from high school. You don't need a college degree to get to heaven. You do need maturity and love of God and faith. If your daughter enters an Order that does not require a degree and then leaves that Order, she can always go to college later. Older students generally are more responsible and hard working anyway. Ask any college professor.

Will she be able to use her education?

Probably yes. Her superiors will want to put her talents to good use. But even if she has a degree in nuclear physics and enters a contemplative Order, that does not mean that her degree is wasted. Who knows better how to pray for nuclear scientists than she? On the other hand, many people get college degrees in one field and never work in it. We don't generally consider their education to be wasted. We just say that they changed careers.

Can we visit? Call? Can she come home? Can she have photos of us?

All of these are questions you'd have to ask the convent or Order which your daughter is considering. Most allow visits, calls, and photos. Most allow vacations, at least once your daughter passes a certain point in her formation.

I don't know where she got all this from. It must be all those religious people she's been talking to. I never encouraged it

Many children select careers which their parents never encouraged. Sometimes others help them learn about those careers. Usually there are many other influences. God does not need your permission to give your daughter a vocation or to call another of your children to an unusual occupation.

We, as parents, say "Let God be God." We have to follow that advice where our daughters are concerned. Those special few who want to give their all to Christ are to be commended, not condemned. God gives us our children to rear and then to let go. If He is calling your daughter to be His, can you give Him this best gift of all? You will have a woman praying for you daily, and isn't that a great pay back for any parent?