



# Boston Catholic Journal

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## To be a Nun



## The Cost of the Call

*"Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."*

**G**od would have our whole and undivided hearts: He is a jealous Lover, when He calls we must follow.

He sets before us a choice, and asks that our love for Him be greater than for all others. We sit, as it were, beside Saint Peter on the seashore of the vast expanse of life, and hear, as St. Peter heard, "*Do you love Me more than these?*" Once, twice — even three times He asks if we are certain, until we reply as St. Peter did — *Yes, Lord, You know I love You!*"<sup>1</sup>

We are put to the test, like gold placed in a furnace — and the furnace is the consuming fire of God's love for us to which the only genuine reply possible to love is, "*Yes Lord I will it ... too.*"

But there is always a price to be paid for answering the Lord's call. The response to a vocation, especially a vocation from God to be a nun, often and sadly leads to grievous divisions and deep misunderstandings in our families, between our closest relations, even our parents ... and the choice to respond to God is often at *the cost of choosing Him above all others* — even at the cost of all others.<sup>2</sup>

## *We are asked to choose*

But we are *asked* to choose, to *choose* to become a Bride of Christ. God does not force the ring of mystical marriage on our fingers. It involves a dying to our own will and desires and demands a radical response to Christ that is exclusive to all others.

It is invariably a path of suffering, but a suffering with the promise of unsurpassed joy. Our most intimate response is two-fold and one: to love and to trust — to trust to the Bridegroom that He will not abandon the Bride ... that He Himself will pay our dowry by way of providing for the spiritual and temporal needs of our loved ones, no less than the Bride He called to Himself.

It is a path of faith, and however long and dark the path, it most often eventually resolves itself in reconciliation and peace between the sister and her family. More often than not, with the passage of time, her family sees that she is happy and fulfilled, and ultimately the sister's joy becomes their own.

This is a Resurrection experience, for *every* vocation passes through and lives the great Paschal mystery.

For some, sadly, a young woman's vocation to be a nun — a Bride of Christ Himself — never comes to acceptance within her family, among her friends, or both. We see this very poignantly in the life of Sister Therese Benedicta of the Cross — Edith Stein. A convert from Judaism, she

was disowned by her family whom she loved deeply. It was the greatest pain to Sister Therese to see her own mother consider her as dead. Her profession as a brilliant philosopher and her renown in academia she threw aside as of no account in responding to the unyielding pursuit of the love of Christ for her. To the death camp of Auschwitz ... to the very chambers and ovens of death, she did not demur from her Beloved. Here we can see most vividly the division that Jesus speaks of in today's Gospel.

But this suffering bears within it its own supreme victory, that Jesus Christ has been chosen above all.

*"Do you love me more than these?"*

In union with the crucified Lord the sister can say with all her heart,

*"Yes Lord, you know that I love you"*

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<sup>1</sup> St. John 21.15

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew 10.37

*A Poor Clare Colettine Nun*

