

10th Grade Religious Life

OPENING SCRIPTURE

Begin with a short prayer and/or lead a meditation based on the lesson's scripture.

REVIEW OPTION

Tie today's class to the previous vocation lesson or other classes you have been working on.

READING

5-15 min

Discuss stories of heroic religious.

Goals:

1. Communicate a reverence for religious life.
2. Help students to be open to praying for God's will in their own lives regarding this vocation.

Preparation:

Review chosen resource. Note interesting parts. Choose important sections to discuss with students.

Instructions:

Time permitting, students might read the entire selection during class, or they could read it for homework before coming to class.

Lead discussion by having students share what most caught their attention, which aspects of the religious life seemed most wonderful, or most difficult. (Note: there will likely be overlap between "the most wonderful" and "the most difficult" because some of the best parts of every vocation are the hardest parts. This may be a great topic for further discussion.)

Students may write about their thoughts on the story, if discussion seems slow. Allow time for the students to think.

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Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come." Mark 10:28-30^[1]

READING

THE ALGERIAN TRAPPIST MARTYRS, OCSO^[2]

Religious who follow the Benedictine Rule, including Trappists^[3], make vows of poverty and chastity. They also make special vows which originate in the Benedictine Rule—conversion of life, obedience, and stability. ("Stability" in this context means staying in the physical place and community God gives you.)

In 1997, seven Trappist monks were put to the test to live out fidelity to this vow in a special way.

The Trappist monks of Tibhirine, Algiers, had a special mission to give witness of Christ and His peace to their Muslim brothers and sisters. In the 1990s, factions of militant Islamic forces terrorized the countryside. The government begged the monks to leave, telling them they could not be guaranteed safety. After much prayer and consideration, the monks agreed that fidelity to their vocation meant fidelity to the specific vow they had made to stability. They had to stay with each other in the place and with the people God had given them. This decision shocked many, because it seemed like a "waste"—why would they stay and be killed surely, when they could leave and do good somewhere else?

One writer notes that "as Cistercian monks following the Rule of Saint Benedict, the brothers...had made a vow of stability binding them permanently to their chosen community. For them, this monastic vow now took on a peculiar dimension: it included fidelity to a people, to neighbors, to acquaintances, to Muslim friends, and to the Algerian Church...the idea of leaving the monastery or Algeria, even temporarily, without denying their vocation was impossible."^[4]

The superior, Dom Christian de Chergé told his brothers on January 4th, 1996, "we are truly being monks by continuing to live here the mystery of Christmas itself, of God living with human beings."^[5] God had chosen to live and stay with man, even though it meant death. He had gone to Jerusalem and He had stayed there, even though He knew it would kill him. This witness is the witness Benedictines make in the vow of stability. In another talk on December 14th,



The Algerian Trappist (Cistercian) martyrs.



Monastery of the Cistercians in Tibhirine, Algiers.

^[1] Scripture taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition, available at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>.

^[2] A film of this story, *Of Gods and Men*, is available. Watch the trailer at <http://www.sonyclassics.com/ofgodsmen/>

^[3] Trappists, also known as the Order of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance, are rooted in a long history. The Benedictine Rule dates as far back as the 6th century, and religious have been living according to interpretations of it for more than a thousand years. St. Bernard of Clairvaux in the 12th century made popular the Cistercian interpretation. A reform at La Trappe, France in the 17th century led to the particular religious life which "Trappists" live.

^[4] Christian Salenson, *Christian de Chergé: A Theology of Hope*, trans. by Nada Conic, Trappist, KY: Cistercian Publications, 2012, 160-161.

^[5] Salenson, 161.

Some discussions starters:

- Were there any words or concepts used with which you weren't familiar? Let's go through those.
- What would be hard about this life? What would be beautiful? If you were there, what would you look forward to? What would you worry about if you were in their shoes?
- Have you ever gone through any experiences like these people (serving the family, being sick, mourning the death of loved ones, being afraid or in danger, standing up for your beliefs, doing work that didn't seem to fit you, having tension with someone you love, etc.)? What did it feel like? How did you deal with it? Help them connect their experience to the story, e.g. "Ok, so you, the student, have felt real fear. It's a terrible thing. Imagine the fear Fr. Christian when he was writing his letter, wondering how soon it might be read by others."

- Do you know any consecrated religious men or women? Do you have a story to share of any religious brothers/priests/sisters that you know and admire? Emphasize the need to pray for openness to the religious life and its importance for the world.



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1995, he encouraged his brother monks: “The answer is to stand firm and to stand together.”^[6]

In Lent of 1996, Dom Christian de Chergé, Brother Luc Dochier, Father Christophe Lebreton, Brother Michel Fleury, Father Bruno Lemarchand, Father Célestin Ringiard, and Brother Paul Favre-Miville were taken hostage. Their bodies were discovered shortly after they were killed in May. The letter that follows was written by Dom Christian de Chergé (1937-1996) to be read in the event of his death. The letter was made public a few days later on the Feast of Pentecost.



If it should happen one day—and it could be today—that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to encompass all the foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community, my Church, my family, to remember that my life was given to God and to this country. I ask them to accept that the One Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure. I ask them to pray for me: for how could I be found worthy of such an offering? I ask them to be able to associate such a death with the many other deaths that were just as violent, but forgotten through indifference and anonymity.

My life has no more value than any other. Nor any less value. In any case, it has not the innocence of childhood. I have lived long enough to know that I share in the evil which seems, alas, to prevail in the world, even in that which would strike me blindly. I should like, when the time comes, to have a clear space which would allow me to beg forgiveness of God and of all my fellow human beings, and at the same time to forgive with all my heart the one who would strike me down.

I could not desire such a death. It seems to me important to state this. I do not see, in fact, how I could rejoice if this people I love were to be accused indiscriminately of my murder. It would be to pay too dearly for what will, perhaps, be called “the grace of martyrdom,” to owe it to an Algerian, whoever he may be, especially if he says he is acting in fidelity to what he believes to be Islam. I know the scorn with which Algerians as a whole can be regarded. I know also the caricature of Islam which a certain kind of Islamism encourages. It is too easy to give oneself a good conscience by identifying this religious way with the fundamentalist ideologies of the extremists. For me, Algeria and Islam are something different; they are a body and a soul. I have proclaimed this often enough, I believe, in the sure knowledge of what I have received in Algeria, in the respect of believing Muslims—finding there so often that true strand of the Gospel I learned at my mother’s knee, my very first Church.

My death, clearly, will appear to justify those who hastily judged me naive or idealistic: “Let him tell us now what he thinks of it!” But these people must realize that my most avid curiosity will then be satisfied. This is what I shall be able to do, if God wills—immerse my gaze in that of the Father, to contemplate with him his children of Islam just as he sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ, the fruit of his Passion, filled with the Gift of the Spirit, whose secret joy will always be to establish communion and to refashion the likeness, delighting in the differences.

For this life given up, totally mine and totally theirs, I thank God who seems to have wished it entirely for the sake of that joy in everything and in spite of everything. In this “thank you,” which is said for everything in my life from now on, I certainly include you, friends of yesterday and today, and you my friends of this place, along with my mother and father, my brothers and sisters and their families—the hundred-fold granted as was promised!

And you also, the friend of my final moment, who would not be aware of what you were doing. Yes, for you also I wish this “thank you”—and this “adieu”—to commend you to the God whose face I see in yours.

And may we find each other, happy “good thieves,” in Paradise, if it pleases God, the Father of us both. Amen.

Algiers, 1 December 1993

Christian+

^[6] Salenson, 190.



OPTIONAL READING

This reading (both short stories together) may be used in addition to or in place of the default reading.



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OPTIONAL READING

ST. DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI, SS.CC. (1840-1889)^[7]

Born in Belgium, Jozef Damien de Veuster joined the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in 1859. Long eager to go on mission, he asked permission to travel to Hawaii and serve there. He arrived in 1864 and was ordained the following year.

In those days there was no cure for the deadly disease of leprosy, nor were the disease and its causes well understood. Many people thought it was possibly a sexually transmitted disease. The Hawaiian Government dealt with the disease by permanently exiling anyone infected to the island of Molokai. Although the Bishop knew the island of Molokai desperately needed priests, he was worried about asking priests to go to a place which would surely kill them. Fr. Damien was one of four volunteers and the first to go.

Where there was sickness, he brought comfort. Where there was no law, he brought order. He built a hospital and a church; he blessed marriages, heard confessions, and offered mass. He got members of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Syracuse, New York, led by Bl. Marianne Cope, to come and nurse the sick.



The coast of Molokai and the leper colony.



Father Damien in 1873, and shortly before his death

When Fr. Damien finally caught leprosy, he not only had to endure the disease itself, but even false accusations that he must have caught the disease through sexually abusing the exiles. Some assumed the worst, but others knew that Fr. Damien had never broken his vows. They knew he had, in fact, lived a life of heroic virtue. They knew they were in the presence of greatness.

When Fr. Damien died in April, he had valiantly served the lepers of Molokai for 16 years.

BLESSED MARIANNE COPE, SOSF (1838-1918)^[8]

In 1838, Barbara Cope was born in Germany, and immigrated with her family to the United States the following year. When her father became ill, she delayed schooling and desired for religious life to work in a factory and support her family for several years.

She entered the Sisters of St. Francis at age 24, taking the religious name Sr. Marianne, and began teaching. She loved teaching, but her organizational abilities made her a prime candidate for administration. Soon she found herself assigned to work behind the scenes, which she found difficult because she worked less and less directly with the people she was serving.

^[7] For more information: vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/2009/ns_lit_doc_20091011_de-veuster_en.html. Robert Louis Stevenson, author of *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, also wrote a magnificent letter defending Fr. Damien which can be read at gutenberg.org/files/281/281-h/281-h.htm [return to text]

^[8] For more information visit vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20050514_molokai_en.html



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However, being an administrator gave her connections and influence. In time, she was able to use this influence to found two hospitals in the area. She was able to begin working with people again—not teaching this time, but in a new field: nursing. She began to work in the hospitals, giving special attention to alcoholics. Who would have guessed, when she entered a religious order to teach, that she would change work so radically and be nursing full-time by the time she was in her forties. But that's nothing compared to what happened next!

In 1883, after being elected as Superior General of her entire order, Mother Marianne received a letter from begging for sisters to care for lepers in far-away Hawaii. It was almost 5,000 miles from New York, and there was no cure for leprosy in those days. To be near it was to contract the disease; to contract it was to die. Mother Marianne said: "I am hungry for the work and I wish with all my heart to be one of the chosen ones, whose privilege it will be to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of the souls of the poor Islanders. . . . I am not afraid of any disease."

In November of 1883, she and six sisters arrived in O'ahu where she took over management of a hospital for lepers. The worst cases were sent to Molokai. Eventually, Mother Marianne and two of the sisters moved to Molokai so that they could take care of Fr. Damien, who was dying, and to continue his work with the lepers.



Mother Marianne Cope with Father Damien after his death.

Blessed Marianne Cope worked until she died a natural death at the age of 80. People considered it a miracle that she never contracted leprosy. God had preserved her to work among the incurably sick for more than 30 years.

DISCUSSION

20-45 min

Note: This background material is provided to help you prayerfully prepare for a lecture, or lead a far-ranging discussion with students.

Introduction:

At solemn profession, a candidate publicly profess vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and sometimes a special additional vow related to the order's special charism. For example, Missionaries of Charity, founded by Mother Teresa, take a special vow of commitment to the poorest of the poor.

Some priests have said that the priestly promises are harder at different times of life, and this is also true of religious vows. When one is young, celibacy might be the hardest. When one is middle-aged, one might wish to have more luxury and spending money. When one is old, he might find obedience the hardest. In addition, community life, just like a family, can drive him crazy, even while it gives incredible joy.

Goals of this discussion:

- It is important to be realistic about what one might face, the highs and lows, in a vocation to the religious life. Every life has highs and lows, and sometimes the “lows” are the very same things that also bring the “highs.” This discussion should help students to understand the realities of the vocation.
- The 4th and final lesson of this unit asks students to complete an exercise imagining the best possible life for each of the vocations. Then students are to ask themselves “Which could I live without?” This discussion helps prepare the students by giving them concrete information about the daily experience of the religious life so that students may make a more informed examination of this final question.

Instructions:

Two related discussions are given below. In the first, list and explain the vows a religious professes, and ask students to consider highs and lows. In the second, hand out “A Day in the Life” and have students look over it to further consider and list highs and lows related to the particular events of the daily life of a religious. Some notes follow below for the teacher to facilitate the discussion and prompt the students, if necessary.

DISCUSSION PART I: THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF RELIGIOUS VOWS

The Vows:

- Poverty
- Chastity
- Obedience
- (Some religious make additional vows, but these are the common three.)

POVERTY

Lows:

- Some might consider the privation hardest—there is some fasting and restriction of television, video games, music, and treats. Your tools and surroundings will be simple and plain, not trendy.
- Others might consider the lack of choice in such matters the hardest. St. Thérèse of Lisieux (a Carmelite) did not talk much about the fasting or plainness of her habit; what she did talk about was when her water pitcher got switched from a one she liked to a big ugly chipped one. The lack of choice was the poverty here.
- An aspect of poverty which was hard for St. Thérèse to practice occurred when she went to get her lamp and take it to her room. She had been planning an hour of work all day and looking forward to getting it done. After night prayers, there could be no talking. She went to get her lamp and discovered that her lamp was gone—it had been taken by a sister who mistakenly thought it was hers. Since there could be no talking, Thérèse could not go around looking for it. She basically had to give up her plans. That was really hard, to go to her room and sit in the dark, losing the hour, and having to put off her project till some other time. Only God's grace made it possible for her to go to bed without the lamp and not be totally angry and full of self-pity. She wrote later: “poverty consists in being deprived not only of what is convenient, but of what is necessary.”^[9]

HIGHS:

- (Spiritual) Poverty allows one to experience a profoundly close relationship with Our Lord, much more than one who is concerned with “having”. “The spirit of poverty eliminates everything that might prevent closeness to Jesus.”^[10]

[9] St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, Ch. 7, ccel.org/ccel/therese/autobio.txt

[10] Fr. Philippe of the Community of St. John – communityofstjohn.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=71:vows

DISCUSSION *continued*

- The Poor Clares call poverty a privilege: “We count it a privilege to be poor in imitation of Jesus Christ. A Poor Clare claims nothing as her own in order that she may rely completely on the Providence of God for all her material and spiritual needs.” [11]
- Such dependence puts a religious in solidarity with all the world’s suffering and teaches a person a kind of compassion which cannot be gained easily in other ways. It teaches gratitude and the profound truth that everything we have is from God: “By imitating Christ’s poverty, they profess that he is the Son who receives everything from the Father, and gives everything back to the Father in love (cf. Jn 17:7, 10)” and mainly “Poverty proclaims that God is man’s only real treasure.” [12]

CHASTITY

Lows:

- Everyone knows there is pleasure, comfort, and spiritual help in marriage—it’s a natural desire and the will of God for most people. Giving up this intimate friendship can be a great sacrifice.
- It’s natural to want married love to bear fruit in children and to look forward to your children’s children. To give this up can be very difficult.

Highs:

(The student handout shows images which exemplify some of the highs of living the vow of chastity – spiritual marriage to Christ and His Church as well as having spiritual children.)

- A religious would not consider himself or herself “single.” Rather, they have chosen a spiritual union with God. Fr. Philippe of the Community of St. John writes: “The vow of chastity in its most perfect aspect consists in a spirit of virginity. . . . A spirit of virginity brings us very close to Jesus, so that we love what He loves.” [13] Many women religious orders have symbolized this union with Christ using bridal imagery. Lots of women’s orders used to (and some still do)

give a wedding dress to a sister entering the order.

- Some religious wear a ring that marks the vow of chastity and permanent commitment to Christ. This commitment is just as serious as marriage; a sister will be buried with this ring. Indeed, one Passionist, Sr. Rose Marie of the Merciful Heart of Jesus, tells how she once hunted around desperately for her missing wedding ring, lost somewhere in a 5 acre field. She sounds just like any sentimental wife when she begs, “Jesus, for the sake of Your love for Your bride, please show me where it is!” [14]
- Likewise, religious don’t see themselves as childless. They give up one kind of parenting for another. The Poor Clares of Kokomo, IN, write “By our religious consecration we are wed to Christ as His brides. This union also makes us the mothers of countless souls as we offer our lives for the benefit of others.” [15]
- The Carmelite Monks of Wyoming write: “Just as a loving father provides for the needs of his children, so the spiritual father, the Carmelite monk, provides for the supernatural needs of his children through the giving of his life in love. Many of these children he will never see until he enters the glory of heaven, but let him nonetheless be convinced that these children are real and that their eternal salvation is very much dependent on his sacrificial love.” [16]
- Whether active or contemplative, religious know that their daily task is to live, work, pray, and suffer for the sake of their spiritual children. Carmelites are contemplatives; behind the scenes they are caring for their “children” just as the Norbertines who run a parish and a school, care for their “children” more visibly in parishioners, families, and students. [17]

OBEDIENCE

Lows:

- Obedience can be difficult. It is hard for everybody to submit the will, plans for the day, and projects to somebody else’s decision. We like to do whatever we want whenever we want. We don’t like to be told we should no longer work on something if we want to keep working on it; we don’t like being

[11] thepoorclares.org/who-we-are/

[12] John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 1996 – vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata_en.html

[13] Fr. Philippe of the Community of St. John – communityofstjohn.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=71:vows

[14] See 8th Grade Religious Life lesson for a the full ring story.

[15] thepoorclares.org/who-we-are/

[16] carmelitemonks.org/SpiritualFatherhood.php

[17] Norbertines are Canons Regular; this is slightly different from a religious order. Nevertheless, they live in community, make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and have an active teaching apostolate. Learn more about the Norbertines and the Abbey of St. Michael at stmichaelsprep.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77 See images at stmichaelsprep.org/index.php?option=com_content&id=79:introduction-to-school

assigned to roles, projects, or places, without our choosing.

- While true obedience never compels us to do something wrong, it does sometimes mean following painfully misguided commands or things which seem like a terrible idea. The Society of Jesus can probably tell the hardest story about obedience in a religious order. They had taken a vow of obedience to the Pope. After baptizing thousands, starting numerous missions and schools, risking life and limb for the Church and traveling to the ends of the earth, they were suppressed. (Pope Clement XIV had a very difficult papacy; this was just one of his many problems. Enormous pressure and bad advice riddled the pope until he finally agreed to close the order in 1773.) Jesuit missions were closed, some Jesuits were forbidden to teach, and all the Jesuits had to figure out what they would do next. Jesuit St. Alphonsus di Ligouri commented on the whole affair: “Poor pope! What could he do in the circumstances in which he was placed, with all the Sovereigns conspiring to demand this Suppression? As for ourselves, we must keep silence, respect the secret judgment of God, and hold ourselves in peace.”^[18] The Jesuits were not restored until 1814. After so much hardship when a Jesuit became Pope in 2013—Pope Francis—it was a great moment for this order.

Highs:

- Fr. Philippe of the Community of St. John writes, “Obedience enables us to go beyond our own will in order to fully satisfy, in the order of execution, our thirst for closeness to Jesus. The spirit of obedience enables us to pass from a deep union with the heart of Jesus to a union which takes our entire life. The love which binds us to Jesus thus takes possession of all our freedom, all our choices, all our preoccupations.”^[19]
- Obedience destroys slavery to ourselves. “I wanna do what I wanna do!” sounds like a battle cry of freedom, but it just means what is best and highest in us grovels before the tyranny of self and whatever it happens to want. That self can tyrannize is clear:
- Self would rather you sleep 30 minutes extra every time than meet God in the Holy Mass—the very God who made you, died for your sins, and calls you to his side.
- Self would rather you watch a movie every night than help a dying man or a starving child. Self’s needs always come before others’ needs, even if self’s needs are tiny and unimportant.
- Self would rather keep its bad habits and faults and quirks

than be challenged, changed, and made heroic. It would rather be bossy, catty, nervous, shy, rude, etc. than become someone pleasant, patient, enjoyable, balanced, thoughtful, and kind.

- Clearly, if you worked for “Self” you would think he was a rotten boss, a real “Scrooge,” who was not looking out for your best interest, and not concerned for anything really important. You would want to quit. Obedience is your ticket to a new life.
- Fr. Philippe summarizes about the vows: “Following Christ in the most perfect way . . . requires a love that is constantly purified so that one may become deeply attached to the heart of Jesus alone.”^[20]

DISCUSSION PART II: HIGHS AND LOWS OF THE DAILY & WEEKLY LIFE OF RELIGIOUS

In this section, discuss the more specific examples of the daily life of a religious. This will be different depending on the particular community one belongs to, but there are many activities which are common to all religious (prayer and work, specifics of communal living, etc.)

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES

Students can have read the story on the Algerian Trappists or Fr. Damien or Marianne Cope. Whether they have read either, you can list off the different events of a religious’ typical day and week, soliciting from the students what some highs and lows might be. The stories are especially useful for examples of “highs” but students will probably also be able to imagine their own. You may even have students turn to sections of either story as you run the discussion and ask students to pick out “highs.”

DAILY/WEEKLY SCHEDULES

The included schedule comparison handout, “A Day In The Life”, is based on schedules from 2004–2014. (Each order makes occasional minor changes, so while these are not necessarily up-to-date, they are closely representative of the reality.)

Every week the orders will take a day for rest and more intense prayer and reflection. Every year religious will make a week-long retreat. Religious have a cycle of when they can have visitors, receive mail, or make home visits. Meals, sleep, and recreation will vary with the liturgical calendar, as will the cycle of prayers and liturgy itself. For active orders, work assignments will change depending on the needs of the people served. Consult their websites or order directly for more information.^[21]

[18] newadvent.org/cathen/14096a.htm

[19] Fr. Philippe of the Community of St. John – communityofstjohn.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=71:vows

[20] Fr. Philippe of the Community of St. John – communityofstjohn.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=71:vows

[21] Quoted in Malcolm Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God*, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, 65–66

ACTIVE OR CONTEMPLATIVE: WHAT’S THE FOCUS?

- Jesus is the primary focus for both active and contemplative orders. And you can see that both types have a significant amount of prayer in their day.
- For the contemplative orders, the substance of their day is prayer. The Poor Clares describe it best: “The life of a Poor Clare is preeminently one of prayer. It is one of adoration and praise of God in His Eucharistic Presence simply because He is God. It is also one of petition for the whole human family. Our contemplative life finds its source and summit in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours around which our entire day revolves.”
- However, the active orders would not say that their main focus is their work. Jesus is their main focus, hence the fact that they do spend several hours a day in prayer.
- God calls people to serve Him in different ways, and we must serve Him in the particular way He asks us. There are many ways to show love; contemplatives do vigil with the Lord while active religious serve God in the persons of the poor, the sick, the elderly, etc. Contemplatives don’t become contemplative because they don’t want to take care of Christ in His people, just as active religious aren’t trying to avoid prayer.
- Bl. Mother Teresa, founder of the Missionaries of Charity, writes about prayer: “It is not possible to engage in the direct apostolate without being a soul of prayer. We must be aware of oneness with Christ, as he was aware of oneness with his Father. Our activity is truly apostolic only in so far as we permit him to work in us and through us, with his power, with his desire, with his love. We must become holy, not because we want to feel holy, but because Christ must be able to live his life fully in us...Love to pray. Feel often during the day the need for prayer.” [22]

HIGHS AND LOWS OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Recreation is communal and much of the life is communal—meals, prayers, work.

Lows:

People in close quarters can really annoy each other. St. Therese of Lisieux mentioned being incredibly irritated with the way one of her sisters would fidget loudly: “I cannot tell you how much it tried me.” [23]

Highs:

- A religious community is like your family. They can bring immense joy, and they also help in your own formation.
- Fr. Michael Casey, a Trappist, explains that community life helps introverts become extroverted and extroverts become a little more introverted: “in each case a complete human being is the aim” [24] so that one might become closer to God. He adds that community life, like every other part of religious life takes time and effort to bear fruit: “The particular mellowness of monastic relationships is dependent on a well-weathered trust and a history of many acts of kindness and forgiveness. Such a level of interaction presupposes many years together, many hardships borne in solidarity, many simple pleasures shared...it has to be worked at for many years and even decades.” [25]

[22] See schedules for:

- Poor Clares of Kokomo, IN – thepoorclares.org/monastic-schedule
- Clear Creek Benedictines, OK – clearcreekmonks.org/horarium.html
- Missionaries of Charity at Holly Pierlot, A Mother’s Rule of Life (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2004), 15 – shop.sophiainstitute.com/Assets/ProductImages/prodpdf/415.pdf
- Franciscan Friars of the Renewal at franciscanfriars.com/cfr-mission/prayer-life/ as well as this article at nytimes.com/2007/04/22/nyregion/thecity/22monk.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

[23] Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*, Ch. 10, ccl.org/ccl/therese/autobio.txt

[24] Michael Casey, *The Art of Winning Souls: Pastoral Care of Novices* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 103.

[25] Michael Casey, *An Unexciting Life: Reflections on Benedictine Spirituality* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 2005), 225.



RELIGIOUS LIFE

In the following images you can see religious sisters making their commitment to Christ as His bride with the same symbols as any bride wears on her wedding day - a wedding dress and a ring. This commitment is just as serious as marriage.



Left: Sr. Rose Marie, a Passionist sister, receives her wedding ring, signifying her marriage to Christ. Below: These Carmelite Sisters, in preparation for becoming Brides of Christ, are wearing their wedding dresses to signify their marriage to Him.

Religious do not view themselves as “childless.” The Carmelite Monks of Wyoming write: “Just as a loving father provides for the needs of his children, so the spiritual father, the Carmelite monk, provides for the supernatural needs of his children through the giving of his life in love. Many of these children he will never see until he enters the glory of heaven, but let him nonetheless be convinced that these children are real and that their eternal salvation is very much dependent on his sacrificial love.”



Fr. Benedict Croell, a Dominican priest, talking to one of his spiritual children at a youth retreat.





RELIGIOUS LIFE

A Day in the Life	Poor Clares of Kokomo (contemplative women's order)	Clear Creek Benedictines (contemplative men's order)	Missionaries of Charity (active women's order)	Franciscan Friars of the Renewal (active men's order)
Midnight	Office of Readings			
Between 4:30-5:20 AM	30 minutes to rise & get ready	30 minutes to rise & get ready	30 minutes to rise & get ready	30 minutes to rise & get ready
Early morning	Prayers and Mass Eucharistic Adoration (2 hr 40 min)	Office of Readings Prayers and Mass (2 hr 15 min)	Prayers and Mass (1.5 hrs)	Office of Readings 1 hour Morning Meditation Prayers and Mass (1hr 45 min)
	Breakfast (30 min)	Breakfast (30 min)	Breakfast & Clean-up (1.5 hrs)	Breakfast (30 min)
Morning—Prayer / Work	Work Period Sext: Midday Prayer (3 hrs 15 min)	Prime Lectio Divina Terce prayer, High Mass Study or Work Period Sext: Midday Prayer (4.5 hrs)	Work Period (4.5 hrs)	Work Period Sext: Midday Prayer (4.5 hrs)
Around Noon	Lunch and rest period (1 hr 45 minutes)	Lunch and rest period (1 hr)	Lunch and rest period (1 hr 45 min)	Lunch and rest period (1.5 hrs)
Afternoon--Prayer and Work	None: Midafternoon Prayer & Work Period (2 hrs 20 min)	None: Midafternoon Prayer & Work Period (2 hrs 55 min)	Spiritual reading and meditation (30 min) Break (15 min) Eucharistic Adoration (1 hr)	Work Period (3 hrs)
	Eucharistic Adoration Vespers: Evening Prayer (1.5 hrs)		Work Period (3 hrs)	Evening Prayer Holy Hour with Eucharistic Adoration (1.5 hrs)
Early Evening	Dinner & Recreation (2 hrs)	Dinner (30 min)		Dinner & Recreation (3 hrs 15 min; includes night ministries)
		Vespers: Evening Prayer Silent Prayer Lectio Divina or Conference (1.5 hrs)		
End of the day: anytime between 7:30-9:15 PM	Compline: Night Prayer	Recreation (1 hr), followed by Night Prayer	Dinner & Recreation (1.5 hrs) followed by Night Prayer	Compline: Night Prayer & Rosary (30 min)
Between 9-10 PM	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime	Bedtime
Total hrs of prayer	Approx 6	Approx 8	Approx 3.5	Approx 3.75 hrs
Total hours of work	Approx 4.5	Approx 3.5	Approx 7.5	Approx 7.5-8
Total hrs of meals / recreation / breaks	Approx 4.5	Approx 3.5	Approx 4.5	Approx 4-5
Total hours of sleep	Approx 7.25, with a midnight rising	Approx 7.25	Approx 6.75	Approx 7

**Instructions:**

Along with these closing points, an optional story is provided to generate discussion, if desired.

I. WE ARE ALL CALLED TO SUPPORT RELIGIOUS LIFE, WHETHER WE ARE RELIGIOUS OR NOT.

Consider these statistics:

- The 2012 CARA Profession report ^[26] notes that 38% of newly professed women religious and 63% of newly professed men were encouraged by a friend were encouraged by friends to pursue the religious life.
- At the same time, 25% of newly professed women religious mentioned being discouraged by a friend, as well as 29% of newly professed men.
- With religious men, friends gave the most discouragement, more than from any relative or co-worker.

One of the best things you can do to support religious life in the Church is encourage and support your friends in exploring a religious vocation.

We don't always realize the power our words have when we dismiss something or treat it like it is old-fashioned or weird or too hard. What if your friend could have cured cancer but never did because she never became a scientist because you discouraged her? The same goes with a religious vocation, except the health of souls (which religious men and women work for) is far more important even than bodily health!

Think of someone in your life who has helped you. What if that person had never made the choices that put him or her in contact with you, simply because a friend in the past said "You

CLOSING READING

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (1491-1556) AND THE VIRTUE OF OBEDIENCE ^[27]

Obedience. It's never been fashionable, but it's always been important.

St. Ignatius of Loyola began life as a soldier; he was passionate, talented, and smart. He could take and give orders. But his career came to a crashing halt when cannon fire wounded one leg and broke the other during a battle. The healing process was terribly complicated and painful. At one point when it became clear the bones were not setting right, doctors had to re-break and reset the leg. There was no anesthesia in this time; for the rest of his life he would limp.

Over the months of recuperation, Ignatius was so bored he turned to reading, and the only books available were a life of Christ and some saint stories. These changed his life forever. He would then go on a long search to find his place in the world of the Catholic Church and the spreading of the Gospel. In this, he was always willing to humble himself. When he had to study Latin to become a priest, he was willing to sit in a classroom of children and learn with the rest of them. He was willing to open and close religious houses wherever the Church directed him.

Ignatius of Loyola made obedience, especially to the Pope, one of the main vows when he founded the Society of Jesus. When infighting and disobedience in a section of the new order threatened the order's very existence—more than 130 religious had left—Ignatius had to take the matter in hand. Vocations were at stake. So he explained just why obedience matters and how to strengthen

^[27] Read more at newadvent.org/cathen/07639c.htm.

^[28] See entire letter at woodstock.georgetown.edu/ignatius/letter25.htm.

Excerpt of a letter from St. Ignatius ^[28]

March 26, 1553, Rome

Saint Gregory says: "obedience is the only virtue which plants all the other virtues in the mind, and preserves them once they are planted." And insofar as this virtue flourishes, all the other virtues will flourish and bring forth the fruit which I desire in your souls, and which He claims who, by His obedience, redeemed the world after it had been destroyed by the lack of it, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross [Phil. 2:8].

... I am very desirous, my dear brothers, that they who serve God in this Society should be conspicuous, so that by this virtue its true sons may be recognized as men who regard not the person whom they obey, but in him Christ our Lord, for whose sake they obey...

I will place before you three [ways] especially which will give you great assistance in attaining this perfection of obedience.

See God in the Superior [and here Ignatius explains and quotes "Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as serving the Lord, and not men, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the inheritance as your reward. Serve the Lord Christ" (3:23-24)].

The second means is that you be quick to look for reasons to defend what the superior commands, or to what he is inclined, rather than to disapprove of it. . . .

The third means to subject the understanding which is even easier and surer, and in use among the holy Fathers, is to presuppose and believe, very much as we are accustomed to do in matters of faith, that what the superior enjoins is the command of God our Lord and His holy will. . . . What I mean is that this manner of subjecting one's own judgment, without further inquiry, supposing that the command is holy and in conformity with God's will, is in use among the saints and ought to be imitated by anyone who wishes to obey perfectly in all things, where manifestly there appears no sin.

this virtue. [See letter.]

St. Ignatius goes on to say that no one needs to obey something which is clearly wrong. He also says that everyone should feel free to go to the person in charge and share his opinion, "should

want to do that?! That's so lame or weird—I would never do that!"

We should all aim for reverence and awe towards religious life, by understanding what it really is and by seeing it as a gift from God – one He may be offering to us or people we know.

II. A LIFE THAT SERVES RELIGIOUS LIFE IS A LIFE THAT PRACTICES PRAYER AND PRACTICES VIRTUE.

All the virtues are needed to support religious life. One especially important virtue is obedience.

See what St. Ignatius has to say about obedience in this story.

[26] uscbb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/consecrated-life/profession-class



RELIGIOUS LIFE



St. Ignatius of Loyola

something occur to you different from his opinion, provided you pray over it, and it seems to you in God's presence that you ought to make the representation to the superior."

He ends by saying that God organized the world so that obedience is a way we help each other. The world is organized so that people can cooperate, sometimes giving commands, sometimes obeying them, as we work together to get to heaven: "It is by this means that Divine Providence gently disposes all things, bringing to their appointed end the lowest by the middlemost, and the middlemost by the highest. Even in the angels there is the subordination of one hierarchy to another,

and in the heavens, and all the bodies that are moved, the lowest by the highest and the highest in their turn unto the Supreme Mover of all."

Pope Pius XI said "this was the special gift of God to Ignatius: to lead men back to the practice of the virtue of obedience."

^[29] Ignatius' advice has been very controversial over the years because people tend to equate any obedience to "blind obedience", which is stupidly following orders without discernment, or making oneself a doormat. But even if one takes the time to understand true obedience, it is a virtue that does not make any sense to the worldly.

However, obedience is the virtue that keeps us close to God. Christ in His Agony said "If it be possible let this cup pass from me, but not my will but thine be done" (Luke 22:42). If we think about it, we owe our redemption to the fact that Christ was willing to do what the Father wanted. As hard as it was to suffer and die, He was perfectly obedient.

Practicing obedience with people—our parents, teachers, the government when it does not command immoral things, or a religious superior, is a way to help grow this virtue in us and keep us close to God. We don't always see the fruits of obedience because the main fruit is spiritual—obedience to God's will.

As of 2010 there were 18,266 Jesuits on every continent. Pope Francis is a Jesuit and Jesuits count 42 canonized saints, including some of history's greatest martyrs: St. Edmund Campion, St. Isaac Jogues, St. Jean de Brebeuf, and Bl. Miguel Pro. The Jesuits have baptized and educated an uncountable numbers of souls. You never know what excellent results holy obedience will produce!

^[29] Epistola Apostolica, Third Century of the Canonization of St. Ignatius, Dec. 3, 1923, AAS, XIV, 628; you can read this quote and more in Fr. John Hardon, SJ's wonderful essay, "St. Ignatius' Letter on Obedience" (http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Virtues/Virtues_003.htm)



HOMWORK: INVESTIGATE RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Investigate two religious orders. Research and write about each, answering questions below for each order. The following suggestions include the orders mentioned as examples in this unit. This list is not exhaustive; for more examples visit <http://www.pathsoflove.com/religious-communities.html>.

SUGGESTED WOMEN’S ORDERS

Active Orders

Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, Ann Arbor, MI: sistersofmary.org

Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, Nashville, TN: nashvilledominican.org

Little Sisters of the Poor, Baltimore, MD: littlesistersofthepoorbaltimore.org

Missionaries of Charity: Do not have an official website, but see cmswr.org/member-communities for contact information for each USA region.

Sisters of Life, New York, NY: sistersoflife.org

Contemplative Orders

Benedictine Nuns, Abbey of St. Walburga, Virginia Dale, CO: walburga.org

Dominican Nuns of Summit, NJ: nunsopsummit.org

Passionist Nuns, Whitesville, KY: passionistnuns.org

Poor Clares, Kokomo, IN: thepoorclares.org

Savannah Carmelites, Savannah, GA: carmelofsavannah.org

SUGGESTED MEN’S ORDERS

Active Orders

Community of St. John, Princeville, IL: communityofstjohn.com

Dominicans, Washington, DC: dominicanfriars.org

Fathers of Mercy, Auburn, KY: fathersofmercy.com

Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, New York, NY: franciscanfriars.com

Norbertine Fathers, St. Michael’s Abbey, Silverado, CA: stmichaelsabbey.com

Contemplative Orders

Benedictines of Norcia, Italy: osbnorcia.org

Benedictines of Clear Creek, Hulbert, OK: clearcreekmonks.org

Carmelites Monks of Wyoming, Cody, WY: carmelitemonks.org

Maronite Monks of Adoration, Petersham, MA: maronitemonks.org

Trappist Abbey of Genesee, Piffard, NY: geneseeabbey.org

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. Who founded the order? If you can find out its history, read it and tell about something that interested you. (This may be somewhat complicated, since there could be a founder of the order which is different from the founder of a specific community of the order!)
2. How do members of the community spend mornings and afternoons?
3. What was something that caught your eye or seemed interesting on this website?
4. Does this order mention if it:
 - Has a special vow in addition to poverty, chastity, obedience? If so, what is it?
 - Practices enclosure? How do they explain it?
 - Has a religious “habit”—distinctive clothing? Describe it.
5. If someone wants to apply to this order, whom does he/she contact and how does one get started?