



The Universal Call to Contemplation

I recently joined Fr. Hank Hilton, Susan Delaney and Phil Russo for the beginning of a video series called [Growing in Prayer](#). I am a contemplative nun, and, during the video, Fr. Hank suddenly asked me if everyone is called to contemplative prayer, or is that something reserved for only a few people? This is a [question that I tackled](#) early on in my religious life. I joined the Discalced Carmelites in 1979, and I made my solemn profession in 1987. Discalced Carmelite Nuns are, by our vocation in the Church, “wholly dedicated to contemplation”. That is a phrase that means that we cannot be called to take part in any ministry outside of our monasteries. We can’t teach in schools or nurse the sick or give professional counseling. Our vocation is contemplative prayer and community life. We are usually called “cloistered nuns”, but that is a misnomer. The correct term is “contemplative nuns”, for that accurately describes our vocation.

Communities of contemplative nuns are never very large, whether they are Discalced Carmelites, Benedictines, contemplative Dominicans, Poor Clares, Adorers of the Precious Blood, or any other institute wholly devoted to contemplation. It is not a

common vocation. God calls to religious life the men and women whom He chooses, and He calls more to active congregations than to contemplative institutes. Does this mean that only a few people are called to contemplation?

Not at all. Religious men and women are called not only to do certain things, to engage in various ministries, but even more importantly, they are called to witness by their lives to the reality of God's love and grace for each person. Teaching Sisters not only teach: by their teaching they witness to God's revelation of Himself. Active religious, men and women, who engage in helping others by counseling, advice, guidance, or other activities, witness to God's grace at work to heal us and bring us to holiness.

Contemplative religious, both monks and nuns, are called to contemplation, and by their lives they must witness to the call to contemplation that God extends to every human being: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." "Be still and know that I am God." Contemplative prayer is not a rare experience reserved for some elite. Extraordinary experiences, such as Bernadette's visions of Mary at Lourdes and the apparitions at Fatima, are indeed extraordinary, but as the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "*Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called 'mystical' because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments – 'the holy mysteries' – and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.*" (CCC # 2014)

Here, at Seeking the Face of God, we want to explore this "ever more intimate union with Christ" that is offered to us through the graces given to us in the sacraments. The horizon is vast and stretches out to the infinity of God. There is much to explore and always more to discover, and all of it is the inheritance that belongs to each of us as a child of God. This is what we were created for.

I hope that you will join us here at Seeking the Face of God. Bring your questions and your desires, your fears and your longings, for they are all part of the life of grace that begins at Baptism.

May God bless you and let His Face shine upon you!