



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Fr. Dominic On His Call

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When I reflect upon my call to become a Benedictine monk I become aware of the many times and varied ways God spoke to me. Though it took a while for me to get the message I realize God has been calling me to follow him since I was quite young.

I am the youngest of four children in a Catholic family and it was normal to have my life revolve around church. Becoming a priest was definitely included on my list of what I wanted to be when I grew up. Between the ages of five and seven I had a recurring dream in which I was kneeling at the foot of an altar and a bishop was standing over me saying prayers. At the time I didn't understand the dream but it seemed very natural to me. Shortly before I made my simple profession as a Benedictine monk the dream recurred; it was then I understood that God had used this dream to call me to follow him.

During my high school and college days I became more interested in becoming a successful businessman. When asked by classmates to explain my faith I realized there were many facets of it that I believed but which I had never really thought about; I needed to learn more. At every opportunity I read books, magazines and newspapers dealing with the Catholic faith. On a college-sponsored trip to New York City, while touring the Cloisters Museum, I purchased a pocket-sized edition of the Rule of Saint Benedict. I cannot honestly say why I picked that book; God knows.

Prior to graduation in 1982 I made a retreat with some of my college classmates. The theme of the retreat was prayer; we focused mainly on praying with scripture. One discussion centered on Matthew 14:22-33, the passage describing Jesus walking on the water and inviting Peter to do the same. Looking directly at me the retreat director suggested, "When you want to decide what you want to do with your life, pray using this scripture text as your guide." It was another decade before I heeded this suggestion and, when I did, I understood that God was telling me to get out of the boat and try my vocation as a Benedictine monk.

Soon after graduating from college I experienced the prolonged illness and ultimate death of my mother. Her example of total resignation to the will of God is something I will never forget. When I began to get on with my life a new question began to nag at me, "Is there more to life than what I have now?" At times it was a plea, "I want more out of my life!" With each job I wanted a better job but when I secured something "better" I still was not satisfied. I spent my time searching for what I found elusive; I was actually searching for God. During this time I was active in my parish and parishioners would ask me if I'd ever thought about



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becoming a priest. Though I had, at the time I denied it. After a while, however, I began to wonder if God had sent these people...

I quietly began to explore the possibilities available to me. I talked to my parish priest who put me in contact with the vocation director for the Saint Louis Archdiocese. He suggested I look into the various religious orders sharing my interest in education and gave me a booklet containing descriptions of many religious orders in the United States, with postcards for requesting more information. It was in this booklet that I discovered there was a Benedictine community in the Saint Louis area; I requested information from the community as well as from a few others. Soon I received literature from Saint Louis Abbey and from the others to whom I had made enquiry. I read what each had to offer but responded to none at that time.

After about a year the Benedictines of Saint Louis Abbey and one other order were still sending me mailings. I asked God to give me some sign of what I should do. A letter arrived from the Abbey's Vocation Director wanting to know how my discernment process was progressing, and in a handwritten postscript he wrote, "If we do not hear from you in response to this letter, I will assume you no longer want me to contact you." Immediately I replied stating that I was interested. Soon after that reply arrangements were made for the first of many visits leading to my joining the Benedictines of Saint Louis Abbey.

Once I had decided to pursue the Benedictines I realized I had to convince my father that I knew what I was doing. After several prayers for divine inspiration I went to see him and told him of my decision. Taking a deep breath, I sat back and waited for his response. "That's fine, son; tell me more about it." Needless to say, I was relieved at this unexpected reply.

No longer do I wonder if there is something better than what I now have. I am at peace. How is this possible? God loved me first; all I have to do is love him in return. God shows his love for me by giving me his Son; I show my love for God by doing his will.