

Consecrated life

FAITH Saginaw sits down with five religious serving in the Diocese of Saginaw to reflect on their vocation

Meet the panel



Brother Kent Bauer, OFM Cap belongs to the Capuchin Franciscan Friars, Province of St. Joseph, a religious order of priests and brothers (friars) which traces its roots to St. Francis and ministers throughout the world. He has served as pastoral administrator at St. Joseph Parish in Saginaw since 2002. He has previously served as director of youth and young adult formation programs, and helped lead programs to feed the hungry in Milwaukee and Detroit. Brother Kent was born on March 15, 1953, in Huntington, Ind., and professed his perpetual vows in 1990. He is the second of three siblings, having an older sister and younger brother. Brother Kent enjoys the outdoors, camping, horseback riding, hiking, golf and gardening.



Sister Diane Bernadette Doughty, OSC is a member of the contemplative community of the Poor Clare Nuns, also known as the Sisters of St. Clare for their foundress, St. Clare of Assisi. She was born on June 27, 1944, in Minneapolis, and professed her solemn vows when she was 28. Sister Diane's siblings include an older brother and older half-brother; however, she said she gained 24 Sisters when she entered religious life. She also has a pet bunny named Brother Leo. Sister Diane said the life of her community focuses on prayer, the community itself and work for the poor. "There are times I wonder why more women are not drawn to our beautiful way of life," she said. "What can be more meaningful than the spiritual journey and sharing this with sisters in community? Joy overflows in me when I am praying for others and praising God with gratitude and awe."

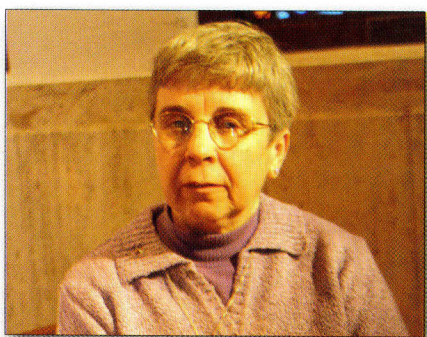


Sister Margaret Mary Tafoya, MSSp belongs to the Mission Sisters of the Holy Spirit, a diocesan community dedicated to ministry within the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw since its beginnings 64 years ago. She serves as pastoral administrator at St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Ithaca and St. Martin de Porres Parish in Perrinton. Sister Margo was born in Saginaw in March 1948 and professed her final vows in 1985. She is a graduate of the former St. Mary Cathedral High School in Saginaw. The Mission Sisters of the Holy Spirit have never been a large community, Sister Margo said, probably 14 to 16 members at its largest. Its members have included nurses, midwives, social workers, religious educators, pastoral associates and administrators, youth ministers and chaplains.

► It is true that grace builds on nature, and God took my personality and strengths into consideration when he **drew me to give myself as a Poor Clare Nun.**



Sister Maria Lin Pacold, RSM is a novice in the community of the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, a religious institute originally founded by the Venerable Catherine McAuley in Dublin, Ireland, and refounded in 1973 by a group of sisters in Michigan. Sister Maria Lin was born on June 13, 1981, in the Chicago suburb of Elmhurst, Ill., and earned her bachelor's degree in classical languages, Latin and ancient Greek, from Indiana University in 2001 and a medical degree from the Indiana University School of Medicine in 2005. Some examples of the Religious Sisters of Mercy's works include serving as physicians, nurses, elementary and secondary school teachers and seminary professors.



Sister Dorothy Ann Blasko, OP is a member of the Dominican Sisters of Oxford, part of the worldwide religious congregation that traces its formation in America to her own hometown of Windber, Pa. She currently serves as pastoral administrator at St. Agatha Parish in Gagetown. Sister Dorothy Ann, who is a coal miner's daughter, professed her perpetual vows at the age of 20, shortly after applying to join the order in 1959. Dominicans are best known as a preaching order of hospitable religious educators and spiritual directors. Sister Dorothy Ann is one of nine siblings, having five older sisters and two younger sisters.

► Share your vocation story. How did you hear God's call to religious life?

Brother Kent: I worked at a pizza place during my high school years; and in a factory as a shipping clerk after graduation. Although I was an active Catholic, it wasn't until the Capuchins came to my home parish that I decided to pursue a Capuchin religious life. After befriending the Capuchin Friars there, I felt they brought a community spirit into parish life. This was one of the reasons why I first became interested in a Capuchin vocation.

The importance of community prayer and working together for the common good is what attracted me to this life style ... Having a global vision sometimes demands my brothers and me to live simply so that others can simply live.

Sister Dorothy Ann: I was taught by the Dominican Sisters of Oxford, who staffed our parish school in Windber, Pa. I was impressed by the sisters' way of life. They had a spirit of hospitality and joyfulness that really touched me.

This was the beginning of my calling. I wanted to enter after eighth grade, but both of my parents said I had to finish my high school education. I graduated from high school and went to work for a year and a half. Another girl, who also was interested in religious life told me she was writing for an application and asked if I was still interested in becoming a sister. I said, "Yes."

With that answer, I wrote an application and entered the Dominican Sisters of Oxford on Feb. 14, 1959.

Sister Diane: It was the summer of sixth grade, looking forward to the seventh, 1954, while I was in bed with mononucleosis or the "kissing disease" as I was teased, that I believe I first felt the stirrings of a religious calling. I was accustomed to going to our parish library and bringing home books. This time I brought home *My Beloved: The Story of*

a Carmelite Nun. I trace my response nine years later, that of entering the Poor Clare monastery in the city of my birth, to that book selection ...

While I was growing up, I had a recurring fantasy about going away to boarding school and receiving letters and care packages and being very special. I would muse about writing home and telling fantastic stories about the goings on at my new school. I am sure reading about a young woman going off to the convent wasn't very different in my imagination to that of going to a boarding school.

It is true that grace builds on nature, and God took my personality and strengths into consideration when he drew me to give myself as a Poor Clare Nun.

Sister Maria Lin: The idea that I might have a religious vocation first occurred to me when I was in college. Most of my friends were evangelical Christians and their fervor prodded me to consider my own faith more seriously than I had up to that point. I had been raised Catholic and had always practiced the faith, but this was the time at which I really began taking my religion to heart.

I started spending more time in prayer, reading the Bible more often, doing some spiritual reading, and making visits to the Blessed Sacrament. I began having the experience, probably common to many religious, of feeling that Christ's words in the Gospel – "Come. Follow me" – had a very specific meaning for my life.

Throughout the rest of college and into medical school, I continued to feel that I needed to explore religious life again. I felt that God was asking more of me than I was giving ... Even though it took a few years, the Holy Spirit eventually got me here.

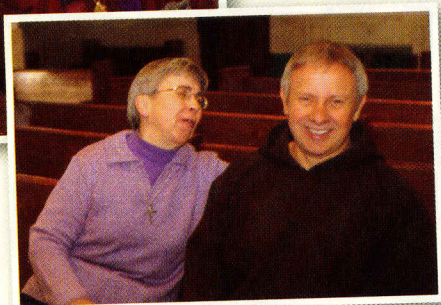
Sister Margo: My decision to enter was not made overnight nor was it made without a struggle. I fought the Holy Spirit for a good 14 years, during which time I experienced restlessness and much questioning. ►



My vision was different at that time. I had “tunnel vision,” seeing only what I wanted to see and doing only what I wanted to do.

Time passed and I came to the realization that ... I was not satisfying the hunger within. I then began to take stock of my life and realized that I was not happy. So I began to pray more seriously and sought spiritual direction in an attempt to determine what I was being called to do.

Today, I celebrate 27 years in this community.



► **How has your life been enriched by your willingness to live out your vocation faithfully?**

Sister Dorothy Ann: My willingness to live out my vocation faithfully has been enriched by my Dominican family, who has always supported me by their prayers, love and care in being faithful to my prayer life, my community and to my Dominican Mission Statement.

My family, friends and relatives have always been there supporting me in my vocation. The people and places where I ministered also have been an inspiration to me and gave me support in my vocation.

Sister Diane: My life has been extremely blessed by the opportunities I have had to develop my relationship with God through prayer and the sisters I live with and through a rich variety of people I have met throughout my religious life.

Moving to Saginaw, I have had so much joy encountering people who live a more rural life style. I have been blessed by listening to people in spiritual direction, praying

with persons (occasionally) in the last stages before death and interpreting at a Sunday Liturgy (monthly) for the deaf community.

Sister Maria Lin: Of course, I am still quite new to religious life, but, even in this year and a half since I entered the community, I know that ... religious life, if lived faithfully, brings many, many opportunities to experience God's grace.

One way of trying to think of it might be that, when religious take vows, they enter into a spousal relationship with Christ himself, who can never, ever fail in love. Our human love fails from time to time, but his never can, so his side of that relationship is always perfect. We can't quite comprehend that, but we can experience a bit of it, which is already pretty overwhelming.

Sister Margo: I have been blessed time and again through my ministry within the church of Saginaw and beyond. The people who have entered my life through my ministry ... have enriched my life and my faith.

I hear their stories filled with joy and pain and I thank them for trusting me enough to share those moments. The children and youth that have been part of my ministries have taught me much about God, service and love through their eyes and their giving.

I find my vocation to be life giving and life receiving filled with joy, laughter, sorrow and pain. It is through all of this that my inner journey is nourished and grows.

► **What advice would you give to a person who is still in the process of discerning his or her vocation?**

Brother Kent: If they are questioning whether they are being called to a religious vocation, I would encourage them to trust their heart and take the next step to discern what God is calling them to do. If it is a good fit they will know it and if not it may help them further to discern what God wants them to pursue. It is a wonderful way to live your faith in the company of others. I'm happy to be called “Brother.”



Sister Dorothy Ann: I would support them by praying for them and encourage them to make prayer a part of their routine. They should talk with their parents or someone they can trust and can confide in. Be prepared to face some struggles and to face temptations along the journey. This is where each person's prayer life will come more into focus and a time that each will want to communicate with a mentor. Seek truth in prayer by always asking the Holy Spirit to guide them along their faith journey.

Sister Maria Lin: The first step in trying to make a decision about a vocation is really to try to grasp, to the extent that we can, the immensity of God's love for each of us. If we can try to do that, we will realize that he desires only what is the very best for us, and we will be able to entrust our lives more fully to him. If we don't have this basic belief in God's love, it is very easy for human fears to hold us back from truly giving of ourselves. So, I think developing that trusting relationship is essential.

Sister Margo: My advice is to pray, pray, pray and find people who enrich and encourage you to step out in faith. Spiritual direction is an avenue that I believe can only help a person in their discernment. God is there directing – one needs to allow God to do this. One needs to trust. ☕

