

Why I Am CSA!

Sister Colleen Braun, CSA

Family has been the real source of my vocation to consecrated life as a Sister of St. Agnes. I grew up with six sisters and my parents. I was number six of the seven girls. At a very early age I learned the give and take rule necessary to live in community. God was very much a part of my life growing up. We lived across the street from the Catholic Church so I had the opportunity to go to Mass during the week when I felt like it. I saw my mother go pretty regularly so I started going as well. My mother also prayed the rosary during the week, often with the radio rosary, and many times I would pray with her.



When I was in 6th grade one of my older sisters joined the Sisters of St. Agnes. She had gone to college to become a nurse but then entered religious life. We could go to visit her 3 times a year and I always enjoyed the visits. I got to meet other sisters in her group and sisters who were her teachers. Everyone was so nice and so welcoming. I believe the seed that was planted in my family experience was being cultivated during these visits with my sister and all with whom she lived.

My years in high school and first years of college were pretty regular I would say. It had the normal amount of studying along with plenty of extra curricular activities. There was band, chorus, cheerleading, church choir, girl scouts to name a few. Dating was part of the high school and college experience as well. In college I was wondering what I was supposed to be feeling as I was dating. There always seemed to be something missing in the experience.

After my first year of college at UW Sheboygan, WI I transferred to Marian College in Fond du Lac, WI. Somewhere inside of me I knew I needed to be in a place where I could better discern my call to religious life. At Marian, along with all the normal college activities, I had opportunities to interact with young women who were in the formation process to become sisters. Talking with them assured me that they were normal folks and very happy people. It assured me that God doesn't call us to be unhappy, but happy.

During that year at Marian I had the opportunity to talk with a sister on the formation team who helped me to ask the right questions and then to move in the direction I felt God was calling me. I wrote a letter to the Mother Superior asking to be accepted into the community. Upon receiving an affirmative reply I then had to tell my parents and sisters. I was a little nervous facing my parents and letting them know that I felt called to become a sister. They were reservedly happy for me at that moment but as time went on and they could see that this is what would really bring fulfillment and joy in my life, they became very happy and supportive of my decision. My sisters were generally supportive. My younger sister was

disappointed at first; she wanted me to get married, but she came around and then was happy for me as well.

Throughout my life as a sister I have been called to discern many different things; what ministry am I called to? Where, in the community, does God want me to minister? Is this community one where my time and energy will be used well for God? I have taught in elementary grades in WI, NY, IN and been a campus minister at Marian College in Fond du Lac, WI as well as at Arizona State University in AZ. It is through continued prayer and a deepening relationship with God that I know what God is asking of me. My sisters in community allow God to speak through them to help me know and continue to respond to God's ever growing call to love.

