

# The Gatekeeper

St. Scholastica Monastery Fort Smith, Arkansas

## My Daughter or Son Has a Vocation! 'Now What'?

This interview is given by the Gatekeeper as part of a vocation feature about parents with children who are discerning the call to religious life. This month we speak with Mrs. Lisa Killeen of Louisiana whose son is thinking about his religious calling.

As a parent who has a child who is discerning his call how do you as the parent feel about this possibility?

**Lisa:** As a parent, I feel extremely blessed to have a son being called by God to the priesthood.

How have you supported your child in his vocation search?

**Lisa:** I have supported Andrew both spiritually and physically with his calling to become a priest.

I encouraged him to attend any and all religious retreats, especially the Come and See re-

treats that are put on by our diocese for young men discerning a religious life.

He always wants to attend these and I have always allowed him to attend.

What fears/hopes do you have for your child?

**Lisa:** I really have no fears per say



about him becoming a priest. My only worry is that he will have to deal with non-Christians who blast Catholic priests because of the few priests who allowed Satan to

weaken them and be drawn to sin.

My hope is that he be happy. Andrew was given to me by God for a very special purpose. When I was a child, I would kneel at the foot of my bed every night to say my prayers. One night, while praying, an angel appeared to me and told me that when I grew up and got married, I would have a child that would be very special. Andrew was born 2-1/2 months early, weighing only 2 pounds. He fought for his life and God protected that tiny angel because He knew that Andrew was special. At a very young age, Andrew received his call from God to become a priest. From that moment on, I knew that God had something very special planned for Andrew. I always tell Andrew that he just may be our First American Pope!!!

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## Monastic Live in: Anything and Everything

In recent months we have been blessed with several women who have come to the monastery for monastic live-ins or come and see weekends. The interest of women who are on the journey of discernment to religious life has been on the rise for many communities and ours is no exception. On average we receive about 15-30 inquiries every six weeks. Having women to inquire is wonderful and having women who want to know a bit about our

way of life is better still! Some might ask us what is a monastic live in or come and see weekend about? It is an opportunity for women to come and get to know us, to live our Benedictine way of life as we live it. Prospects are invited into our way of life, to pray with us, to dine with us, to visit and work with us. There are tours, and visits to Hesychia and Subiaco, there are times of solitude and times for recreation, and dialogue with the vocation direc-

tor and other members of the community. It's a chance to glimpse into the possibility of God working in our lives not only individually but collectively.

Who are some of these monastic seekers? The answer might surprise you! Check out our webpage for more information about monastic live in opportunities.

Sr. Kimberly Rose Prohaska, OSB—

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### Special points of interest:

- *My Child has a vocation, Now what?*

Parents share insights about their discerning kids.

- *Monastic Word of the Month*
- What a Monastic Reads: **Growing Season: A Healing Journey into the Heart Nature** by Arlene Bernstein

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## Benedictine Bookends: What a Monastic Reads

### Growing Season: A Healing Journey into the Heart of Nature

by

Arlene Bernstein



Here at St. Scholastica Monastery, our librarian, Sister Catherine Markey, is very good at placing interesting books in an easily accessible table on the second floor just down from our chapel. So we usually browse the current ones on display on our way to prayers or Mass.

I have been interested in gardening and have had one at the various houses I have lived in during my adult life. So when I spied Arlene Bernstein's *Growing Season*, I picked it up and began to read as I strolled toward the chapel.

The book tells of the "growing seasons" in the author's Napa Valley vineyard that she and her husband transformed from a "prune farm". But more than this outward transformation, she also ties it into the inner journey of her own spiri-

tual transformation or rather as she puts it, "of how the land transformed me."

The author addresses how she came to deal with the painful loss and lingering grief in her life. She states that through her experience with the garden and the vineyard, she learned to listen to the answers to these sad moments.

She begins with the "seeds" which offers a background insight into the losses she has encountered and how they relate to her environment and the season she is now part of.

She relates how her inward journey is very similar to her reconnecting with the land, her self, and the creative source.

The tragic loss of their year-old son is the catalyst for the pain of both Arlene and Michael. Each has a different way of coping or maybe not coping with this monumental and unplanned loss. This event will not only take its toll on each of them but it will lead to an inability to communicate their feelings to each other.

"Fertile Ground", the second part of the book, speaks to the involvement of the environment of the vineyards, scenery, and gardens under the watchfulness of Mount Veeder. She states that these three identities became her "monastery" and "spiritual teachers". Some examples of the lessons learned might come from the insects (ants and worms), the weeds, or maybe even the compost pile. Silence and change witnessed to her learning to see a meditation in all life experiences.

In the third and final part of the book, "Ripening and Harvest," she speaks of the changes that have taken place in Michael and her as they learn to grow together and recognize the healing that has taken place in their lives.

I have not experienced the loss of a child but I did lose a granddaughter at two months of age. So, as the author emphasizes, we all experience losses and disappointments; conflicts in relationships; change, wanted and unwanted. Our experiences may be different from those in "Growing Season" but if we learn to cultivate our inner garden of silence, we may be better prepared to learn how to cope and grow from these good and not so good experiences. The metaphor of the garden can help us in this venture.

I learned to have a healthy respect for those uninvited guests in my garden, be those insects or weeds. I also became better prepared to fully enter into each season of my own life with all of its blessings.



Sister Alice O'Brien—

# My Daughter or Son Has Vocation! Now What?

(Continued from page 1)

Issues that concern me about my child entering with seriousness and conviction to the religious life for me as a parent are:

**I really have no concerns about Andrew becoming a priest.**

What are some things you would want to know about before Andrew considers answering the call of religious life?

**The only thing I would like to know are the details about education where the seminary is concerned...what the steps are up until his ordination.**

How do you see yourself as a parent supporting Andrew after he answers the vocation call?

**I would keep him in my prayers so that God remains first in his life. I will help him in any way to become a better Christian and priest.**

How do you see yourself as a parent possibly hindering Andrew after he answers his vocation call?

**I would NEVER hinder my child. I have always taught my children to put God first in their lives and if God is calling one or ALL of my children to live a religious life, I cannot stand in the way of that.**

How might the Church better support parents and families of those who become vowed religious?

**I think it would be nice for the Church to give literature to the parents on what it is like to be a priest, sort of like one of those "For Dummies" books. Most people really don't know what the priest does, outside of Mass on Sunday.**

Lisa, please address any thoughts or concerns about the role of parents and children and the vocational life.

**Parents play such an important role in their child's life whether they are young or old. As a parent, we want to keep our children with us forever. Of course, that is not reality. God blessed me with 3 beautiful boys. One of those, Andrew,**

**God has called to live his life for Jesus Christ through priesthood. How can I possibly discourage him from entering religious life? That would be like me telling God "No, you can't have my son."**

**I will always encourage him and support him no matter what he does. I always tell him, "Andrew, everyone is always telling you that you will be a wonderful priest. You cannot become a priest because EVERYONE tells you that you will be a good priest. You have to WANT to be a priest because you are called by God." He always replies with a smile, "Mom, I WANT to be a priest and serve God."**

**The way I look at it is that if Andrew does become a priest, he will be so wonderful. If he decides he would rather get married and raise a family, he will be an INCREDIBLE father and role model for his children. It's a Win-Win situation.**

**I will say, I have NEVER met a young person who is as spiritual as Andrew is. He is truly a remarkable young man.**



Andrew Killeen, Lafayette, LA

The Gatekeeper publication thanks Mrs. Lisa Killeen for giving us this interview. We wish Andrew and all those thinking about being Priests, Brothers, Sisters, and all those called to consecrated life our prayers and support. If you are a parent or are a discernor whose parent might want to share more about vocations, please contact us. We want to know your story, too!

Sister Kimberly Rose Prohaska, OSB—

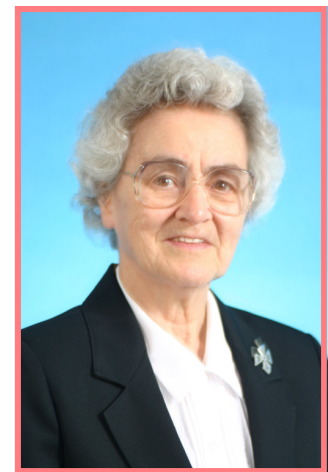


## Vocation Prayer: Sister Adrian Wewers, OSB

**God of Love, God of infinite compassion, we come before you in thanksgiving for all the blessings and graces you have given to this community.**

**Now we stand before you asking you to send new members who are willing to follow and serve you in our monastic way of life.**

**Holy Spirit, the message to spread God's Word is urgent and needs to be proclaimed to all people. Make us willing to be true witness and give Christ-like examples to those around us. Make us humble of heart and fill us with gratitude knowing that you alone can fill our every need. This we ask in Jesus name. Amen.**



Sister Adrian Wewers, OSB

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*Consider  
Your  
Call*



*"Listen carefully,  
my daughters  
to the master's  
instructions..."*

Rule of St. Benedict Prologue

**Come and See Monastic Experience**

**For Women and Men ages 18-45**

**St. Scholastica Monastery**

**1301 S. Albert Pike Ave.**

**Fort Smith, Arkansas 72903**

**To attend this annual summer retreat contact:**

**Sister Kimberly R. Prohaska at 479-783-4147**

## **Monastic Word of the Month** **Conversion**

"The act or process of converting; state of being converted, change in character. form or function. Spiritual change from sinfulness to righteousness."

## **Do you know a woman we'd like to know?**



**Does she have listening heart-like ours?  
A Heart filled with passion for being a God seeker?**

We are Benedictine Sisters:

Committed to seeking God, rooted in a rich monastic tradition. Women who seek to be a voice for the voiceless—by living a life balanced in hospitality, simplicity, and in the wisdom of the Gospel.

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*Please share with women  
information about the sisters of  
St. Scholastica!*

*Write, or Call today!*

Do you know a woman who would like to know more about us?

*We'd like to know her too...*