

“When I found Him Whom my heart loves...I would not let Him go!” Sg 3:4
Recognizing and persevering in God’s will: a discernment retreat with the Cloistered Dominican
Nuns of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament

Q & A (this is just a more detailed version of the overview)

WHO is the target audience for this retreat? Do I need to feel like I have a vocation to this particular monastery?

This retreat is intended for young (ages 18-35), unmarried, practicing Catholic women (please only American citizens/permanent residents) pursuing a mature discernment of religious life, especially the possibility of cloistered/contemplative life, or at least open to it. This means, among other things, that they should already be actively pursuing healthy spiritual growth including by frequenting the sacraments in regular confession (at least once a month when possible is usually a good rule of thumb) and attending daily Mass and receiving holy communion as often as possible, spiritual reading, spending time daily with the Scriptures and in devotional prayer—especially the rosary—and regularly discussing their spiritual life/discernment with a spiritual director, if able. It is not necessary that they have decided that they definitely feel like they have a vocation (part of the purpose of the retreat is to help get to that point!), but ideally they should already feel some kind of attraction/openness to the religious life, and in particular to the cloistered and/or Dominican life. It is hoped that this time spent in retreat will help participants sort through their already existing questions and concerns to come to a better understanding of whether or not God does seem to be calling them to this way of life or some aspect thereof, and especially possibly to this monastery. If you don’t exactly fit that entire description, though, don’t worry! Those are just guidelines of who is most likely to benefit from this retreat, but others may as well.

Why is there an age limit?

Under normal circumstances, we only accept candidates between the ages of 21 and 40. There are many reasons for this, including that candidates should be mature enough to responsibly undertake a way of life that is spiritually and physically difficult in many ways, but young enough to ensure the greatest possible capacity for growth and docility in formation. The admission of older candidates is also avoided in part because the formation period of 9-12 years after entrance may make it more difficult for them to live outside the monastery should they not persevere until final profession. Younger candidates are also less likely to have impediments to entering religion, including previous (non-annulled) marriages, children or other dependents, and large unresolved debts. The age limit of this *retreat* is intended to limit participants to those who would be most likely to be eligible to apply for entrance within the next few years, if they felt so led. The upper limit is lower than that for our application process since one to two years of aspirancy is required by Church law before entering the monastery, as well as to somewhat limit the possible range of ages present amongst retreatants.

Will you make exceptions to the age limit?

No exceptions will be made for minors (those under 18). However, if a girl under 18 truly has an interest in our life, she is certainly welcome to visit the monastery and even request to speak with the vocation directress for informational purposes. Please call 248 626-8321 to schedule an appointment or email dnfvocations@gmail.com. For those over 35 and below 40 who are interested, *please do not hesitate to inquire as exceptions will be made for applicants who are otherwise eligible as long as there is available space.*

WHAT should I bring?

Retreatants will be sleeping on our Guild Room floor, so you will need to bring a sleeping bag and/or some kind of bedding that will be comfortable enough for you to endure for a night or two. You will also need:

Change of clothing (including pajamas) sufficient for one full day and one or two partial days, depending on when you arrive.

Bath/night robe to be worn over pajamas for modesty

Tooth brush and toothpaste

A personal wash cloth if you would like to take a “sink shower” (shower facilities will NOT be available during the retreat, but wash cloths may be provided as needed for those who do not bring one)

Rosary

Bible and/or missal/missalette

Journal/personal notebook if desired (paper for notes will be provided as well)

Any other necessary personal items

Is there a retreat dress code?

Out of respect for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and our friars, please wear loose-fitting, modest attire.

Please NO low-cut or sleeveless shirts/blouses

Skirts/pants should fall to about mid-calf or lower, but MUST be below the knees when seated.

Please try to avoid large logos/slogans, as they can be distracting

Head coverings/scarves/mantillas worn out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament are certainly appropriate, especially if you are already in the practice of wearing them, but are *not* required

Please wear a bath/night robe over your pajamas

WHERE will the retreat take place?

Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament
Cloistered Dominican Nuns
29575 Middlebelt Rd
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

WHEN will it be?

The official dates of the retreat are July 20-21, 2024. However, anyone who is able is encouraged to arrive on the day before, **July 19th**, between **1pm and 4pm** if possible—especially if you will need to be picked up from the airport (please call or email if you have questions about arrival arrangements outside of this time frame, and make sure to have lunch before arriving as meals will not be provided before supper). That way you will have some time to settle in before the retreat starts. The opening Mass on the 20th will be at 7:15am at the monastery, and the retreat will close with 7:15am Mass on the following day, after which retreatants are welcome to a farewell breakfast.

WHY would I be interested in attending this retreat?

For any young woman who feels she might be called to contemplative and/or Dominican religious life—especially to this monastery in particular—or at least is open to the possibility, this retreat will give you a taste of both. The discernment process involves many steps, and it certainly isn't all about head knowledge—reading about the life on the internet or in books, or even hearing about it from those who have lived it. A big part of confirming whether or not one really has a vocation is very often visiting the place being considered and seeing how you feel before, during and after your time there. “Come and see!” (cf. Jn 1:29) For those who aren't sure where they feel called but think it *could* be to a contemplative/Dominican vocation or are at least open to the possibility, this retreat may give you a better sense of how God may be calling you to move forward in your journey, and provide you with some new tools to do so. Besides, you'll have a whole monastery of nuns praying for you!

HOW will I get there?

If you will be flying in from out of state, please let us know as soon as you have finalized arrangements. Your return flight should not be any earlier than 10:15ish in order for our externs to be able to get you to the airport on time after Mass.

If you will be driving and are interested in carpooling, please indicate that in the appropriate area of the registration form, and if there is enough interest the vocation directress will coordinate with the interested parties.