



April 18, 2021 – Easter 3 (B)
Meet Our Religious Communities: What's in It for Me?

How can a religious order help me in my spiritual journey?

Connection with a religious order can include spiritual guidance and friendship, resources, connection with other friends of the community, and retreat opportunities. Religious communities offer prayers for the world and individuals as requested.

How can I learn about a religious order?

Religious orders are listed on the CAROA website (www.caroa.net) and The Episcopal Church website, with a short description of each community and link to each community's website. You might consider which community is most convenient for you to visit and which seems to speak to you. You could ask to be added to their mailing list for email and newsletters and also check out their social media presence.

Attending a retreat or a short visit or watching a video could be first steps in getting to know the community and to see if it is a good fit for you. Retreats may include a speaker, spiritual direction, periods of silence, or may be a self-directed retreat in which you decide how to spend your time. It is a good idea to check out what is offered and consider what will best meet your needs at this time. Some retreatants find that they need a lot of rest



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and sleep; some want opportunities to talk with members of the religious order and other retreatants; some yearn for extended periods of silence, prayer, reflection, and journaling.

How can I engage with a religious order?

After the pandemic, taking retreats on a regular basis can be nourishing and supportive, and can offer opportunity to build your relationship with a community. Some religious orders offer on-going spiritual direction, usually for a donation. Communities sometimes have volunteer opportunities and welcome financial support.

Once you have made a connection with a community, you might want to develop a closer relationship and establish a deeper commitment. Most communities have associate and/or oblate programs which usually begin with a discernment process and preparation, followed by formal service of commitment. Associates and oblates usually promise to pray for the members of the community and other associates and oblates, to offer financial and other support, to commit to a rule of life, and to attend retreats for associates and oblates on a regular basis.

It may make sense to become an associate first before considering becoming an oblate. Oblates usually have a more extensive period of discernment and preparation, and may take vows. Some oblates receive a habit. Often oblates promise to attend regular meetings or programs specifically for them at the convent or monastery and to support the community in specific ways.

While contacting a religious order may seem daunting at first, you will likely receive a warm welcome and gain spiritual friendship which can sustain you and nourish your soul for years to come. We look forward to hearing from you!



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