

Sister Theresa Lamy, SSND -60 Year Jubilee!



"My advice is to leave yourself open to God, because God will let you know what you need to do."

Sister Theresa Lamy Shares Her Story

I originally entered a Dutch community called the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, in Baltic, CT. They were strict, but it was before Vatican II. Afterwards, the Dutch group adopted the changes with enthusiasm, but the Americans did not. They petitioned to become a separate community, the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother of the Church.

I think it was the only community to become more strict after Vatican II than it was before! I expected things to change over time, but they did not.

The community did believe in education. I studied at Catholic University for two years and was exposed to new ideas. The community called me back to teach awhile before allowing me to finish my degree and begin studying for my master's back at Catholic University. I got to know marvelous people, including Sister Therese Marie Dougherty, SSND, and a Benedictine priest, both of whom were to become very important in my discernment.

Then I developed a detached retina. The doctor wanted me to go to Johns Hopkins for treatment. I couldn't drive with both eyes bandaged but accepted the invitation to stay with the SSND Sisters with whom I'd made friends. That experience gave me a very good introduction to SSND. I started discerning a transfer.

Wonderful Sign from God

In September 1972, I was back in in Byram, Connecticut. Shortly before Easter, my Superior General asked me to go to Washington as a tour guide for some of our Sisters during Holy Week. It was the last thing I wanted to do during Holy Week, but I thought it would be a good opportunity to speak with a former teacher and Benedictine priest whom I greatly respected.

I met with him and explained what I had been discerning. He said it was obvious that I should transfer and asked if I had thought of a community. When I said the School Sisters of Notre Dame,

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he was very encouraging. He urged me to contact Sister Francis Regis, the SSND Provincial of the Baltimore Province. She came to Washington to meet with me the very next day. We talked in an empty classroom on Catholic University's campus. She said the SSNDs would be happy to have me.

Upon my return to Byram, I wrote a letter to my Superior General asking permission to spend a year with the SSNDs to discern my future. As soon as she received my letter, she phoned to say that she was coming up to Byram the following day.

The next morning, driving to the consolidated school where I taught, I knew I needed to tell Sister Francis Regis what was happening. I hadn't been able to use the house phone, because I didn't feel comfortable asking for permission to use it to discuss a transfer. The thought came to me that I had enough Missions money for a pay phone, so I drove to a phone booth and made the call in private. When I hung up, all this money came pouring out. The Missions made out much better than they would have if I had not called. Such a wonderful sign from God! There were a lot of little signs like that.

That afternoon, the superior general and two other sisters - including one who was to replace me at school - came. At the meeting, I had to argue to finish out the school year.

Some of the Sisters who had known of my discernment were very supportive. The Superior General relented.

The day after school ended, two SSNDs came to get me. Mother Georgianne Segner, the Superior General, had sent word from Rome that I wouldn't need to repeat the Novitiate, but only to read and study *You Are Sent* with one of the Sisters who had been present at the General Chapter and who had helped to write it. It was so wonderful.

Going to the School Sisters was no struggle. It was right. The other community was so strict and adamant, it would have been a struggle to remain there.

My experience of transfer felt directed by God. God wanted me here. It's been true for the rest of my time. Never once have I questioned or regretted my decision.

Ministries at a Glance

In my original community, I was a grade-school teacher. After my transfer, I taught in high school and then served in our nursing home for five years. Then I moved to the College of Notre Dame Maryland (now Notre Dame of Maryland University or NDMU), where I taught for five years, and then studied for my doctorate.

A couple of years later, I got a letter asking me if I'd serve as academic dean *Cont'd*

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at Mt. Mary College in Milwaukee. I balled it up and threw it away. After a while, it troubled me. I got it out of the trash and smoothed it flat on the table. I agreed to an interview and was offered the position. I talked with a councilor about it. I didn't want to agree, but I called the President and said yes. When I hung up the phone, I burst into tears. I knew it was a call from God. The experience stretched me in a good way, but I was glad to return to the College (now University) of Notre Dame six years later.

Twenty years later, after a rewarding career at NDMU, I was asked to discern coming to Villa Notre Dame in Wilton as the local leader. By now I knew how God works with me, so I went. I knew almost nobody. I walked into a lobster fest with at least 100 Sisters. I knew only three or four. What a shock! I came to love them all.

And Finally...

Many times I've struggled with God, felt that God was not present.

Once, while on retreat, I was walking on a path kicking stones saying, *You think you can just show up when you want to and that's supposed to be okay with me.* As I turned at a bend along the path, I came upon a big buck with a huge rack of antlers. We looked into each other's eyes. Then he walked away slowly. I continued my walk, but I wasn't kicking stones anymore.

Even when I've struggled, it never made me question my vocation or ministries.

What I love most is listening to people, which I've done in all my ministries. My great gift is listening. This was so important when the Sisters had to move to The Watermark. If those Sisters, especially, turned out to have been the only grace in my life, that would have been enough.

My advice is to leave yourself open to God, because God will let you know what you need to do.

I thank God all the time.