



Blessed be God!
Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Province of the Immaculate Conception

Aspirancy

The Aspirancy is a period of formation during which a candidate, who becomes an 'Aspirant', commits to seriously discern her calling as religious sister in the community of the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (SJS). While the candidate remains with her regular work/study schedule,¹ she meets frequently and responsibly with her vocation director twice or once a month.

PURPOSE

Candidate

Discover her vocation – God's call and personal response through a program of self-knowledge and prayer.
Increase knowledge of the SJS community as a possible option to live out her religious vocation.

The discerner is given tools to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus and to discover her vocation in life through a program of self-knowledge and knowledge of the SJS way of life including spirituality and apostolate.² In order to know herself and the gift she could give to the church, the candidate fills out reflection questions regarding her personal life such as her family history, her employment experience, her spirituality, etc. The discerner is invited to pray with the SJS sisters in the religious house closest to her where she will also have the opportunity to interact with the religious sisters and learn more about the SJS mission and ministry.³

Congregation

Determine the suitability of the candidate to be a part of the SJS religious community

CONSTITUTIONS

62. We offer young women who wish to enter the Congregation a stage of preparation or Aspirancy, whose main objective is to have the candidate experience the living Christ, a more concrete knowledge of herself, religious life and the specific purpose of the Congregation.

62.1 The mayor superior, with the consent of her Council, sets the rules for admission to the Aspirancy, as well as the duration, place, and manner to be carried out following the General Directory's guidelines.

63. The sisters responsible for the Aspirancy, must diligently investigate the right intention and free will of the candidates, of their spiritual, moral and intellectual aptness, as well as their physical and mental health. Likewise, they should consider the family environment where the young ladies come from. Likewise, they must examine the capacity of the Aspirants to live the Eucharistic and Apostolic spirit of the Congregation and how they fulfill, within the community environment, the commitments of religious life.

63.1 It is necessary that the sister responsible for the Aspirants follow a formative process that helps the discernment of the young women as they determine their vocation. At the same time, this process should allow a careful selection of the candidates, according to the criteria of the Church and the Congregation. Thus, those who manifest signs of a true vocation may enter this religious family.

¹ Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. Directorio General #71

² Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. Constitutions Art. 62

³ Directorio General # 71.3

SJS DIRECTORY

During the Aspirancy, it is not required for the candidate to leave home/family. Admission to this stage is reserved for candidates who show signs of a religious vocation, and who sincerely request to be admitted to a more profound discernment process. It pertains the local superior to accept the discerning candidate to begin this process, and to the local or provincial vocation coordinator to be a guide for the completion of the program as outlined by the congregation. (Dir. 71, 71.20)

The sister facilitating vocation discernment must follow an adequate, gradual process that will offer human, Christian and spiritual formation, thus when the Aspirancy program is complete, the candidate will have the tools to make a free and conscious decision. (Dir. 71.21)

During the aspirancy, the candidate will have the opportunity to responsibly practice and collaborate in some aspect of the apostolic mission of the community. It is also important for the aspirant to participate in some spiritual activities of the local community as determined by the local superior. (Dir. 71.22)

Aspirancy lasts one year; however, the major superior may exceptionally exempt or shorten it when there is evidence that the candidate possesses the selection criteria, preparation and knowledge of religious life. (Dir. 71.23)

Towards the end of the aspirancy, the vocation director and the candidate move from discernment to decision. Once the candidate has responded freely to God in faith to enter religious life, and the vocation director testifies of her suitability through a screening process, the candidate applies to enter the convent.⁴ This journey is one that the candidate does not make alone. All through the process, her vocation director is not only committed to provide guidance during formal and informal meetings but also offers prayers for the candidate.

Once an aspirant enters the Congregation, the vocation director concludes the discernment accompaniment of the candidate, and is encouraged to continue supporting her vocation only through prayer, without interfering in the formation process. (Dir. 71.24)

The Program

The name of the program during the aspirancy is titled "God, grant me a discerning heart" from the National Religious Vocation Conference www.nrv.net. This is a discernment manual directed towards helping the discerner to know herself and to discover her vocation. "The program is divided into 14 sessions, each dealing with a unique component of the individual's background and history and including different issues touching upon religious life. These are not exhaustive but are meant to begin the process of discernment. Other topics may be added or substituted as the sessions unfold." "Between sessions a discerner will read the appropriate scripture passages; reflect on the suggested quotations and questions; journal about her prayer and reflection; and prepare to share these reflections with the director."

⁴ Ibid; 71.2