



Joining Benedictine Women of Madison

The call to community life is an invitation from God. To hear and respond to that call involves being in conversation with God, with the community, with your deepest desires, with others who know you well. Over time, the conversation, which we call discernment, leads to more clarity about God's call for you. Often discernment answers the questions: What is the purpose of my life? With who do I want to live? Whom do I want to serve?

This correspondence hopes to answer some of the questions asked by women discerning a call to community life. What is the process for entering Benedictine Women of Madison? How long does it take? What are the requirements?

Community living involves developing relationships based on communication and living experience. The initial stage of the process of discernment is a time when we become acquainted with each other. You share some information about yourself as you get to know us, and we share with you the values that serve our communal life. After this initial phase, if a woman is interested in discerning her call, we ask her to visit the community several times to continue the conversation with the membership director and the other sisters.

Discerning a call to community life requires a period of time. Since each person is unique, the amount of time and the process varies according to one's familiarity with the monastic life, distance from the monastery, overall health and financial status. Often a woman is in contact with the community a year or two before entering.

It is necessary that a woman be single without dependents and between 25 and 50 years of age. Exceptions to age may be considered. She will have a high school diploma or GED. A college degree and/or several years of work experience are highly desirable. Generally a woman is asked to be free of large debts and to have sufficient funds to cover insurance and living expenses during Candidacy (first stage of incorporation). A woman will be a baptized Christian and living a celibate life. Usually a period of several years is beneficial between the time of a woman's divorce or death of a spouse and discernment for joining the community. For a woman with a previously active addiction, a length of time is required of her to be in recovery before entering community.

Our desire is to assist the seeker in determining how God is working in her life. Prayer is especially important. The grace of a call to community life flows from fidelity to our Christian commitment, as a further living out of our baptismal promises.