

Sisters with Down syndrome from the Little Sisters, Disciples of the Lamb congregation. (Courtesy of Vida Nueva Digital España)

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Veronique, a young woman with Down syndrome, confided in Mother Line in 1985 about her desire to enter the contemplative life. She told her friend that, after feeling this vocation, she had knocked on the doors of several convents but was turned away, since there were neither precedents nor canonical grounds for accepting a person in these circumstances.

So, Mother Line set to work, and in 1999 the congregation of the Little Sisters, Disciples of the Lamb was approved by the Archbishop of Bourges, Pierre Plateau. This community is now based in the French town of Le Blanc in the Indre region, following an initial period in a small village in Touraine where space had become too limited.

The creation of this congregation arose from the conviction that Veronique's could not be the only vocation, that her witness would draw others to the contemplative life within the new community born of the shared life of these two women. A key factor in reaching this decision was the personal background of Mother Line, who had studied psychology and had some experience as a catechist with groups that included children with Down syndrome. Drawing on this experience, she was able to recognize Veronique's "deep spiritual inclination."

> The Little Sisters, Disciples of the Lamb are the only congregation of sisters with Down syndrome. In France, this contemplative community emerged from a vocation that was initially rejected and today integrates a life of prayer, work, and community living.
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Ora et labora

The nun's expectations — she is now the community's superior — were soon fulfilled. At the same time, the necessary canonical requirements were developed to adapt the regulations as much as possible to the community's needs and requirements, so

that the closed-door situation would not happen again and the community could be established as an official religious institute of contemplative life with all the necessary guarantees.

Currently, the community consists of seven sisters with Down syndrome who live together with Mother Line and Sr. Florence in a former priory in the French countryside, which they themselves are adapting through the work with which they put their "ora et labora" into practice. The sisters themselves speak of the complementarity of two vocations, since the community "has the support of sisters without disabilities who have responded to the call to love the little ones by consecrating themselves to God alongside their sisters with disabilities to form a single community with them," they explain.

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