

[News](#)

[Religious Life](#)



Sr. Catherine Lucia Phoebe Addington of the Daughters of St. Paul in Alexandria, Virginia, is pictured kneeling in prayer during her profession of vows in Boston Feb. 14, 2026. (OSV News/Courtesy of Daughters of St. Paul)

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Sr. Catherine Lucia Phoebe Addington of the Daughters of St. Paul still remembers when she first walked into a convent chapel as a fourth grader.

"I saw the sanctuary lamp lit, and that was absolutely mind-blowing to me," she said of visiting the home of the religious sisters who taught at her school. "I said, 'Wait, nuns get to live with Jesus? I didn't know that — sign me up!' "

Sister Phoebe is among four religious sisters professing vows in 2026 who spoke to OSV News about their vocation stories and what led them to dedicate their lives to God. Their journeys are different: Some grew up regularly attending Mass, and others did not. Some knew they were called to religious life, and others walked a more complicated path. One sister temporarily left the church before joining her community. Another wanted to be a sister as a toddler.

Their stories also feature similarities. Prayer, the sacraments and adoration played pivotal roles. Many were drawn to God's unconditional love.

All of them wanted to give themselves totally to God.

Sr. Maria Trinity joined the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville, Tennessee, after growing up in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Her parents came to the U.S. during the Lebanese Civil War and raised their three daughters in the Melkite Greek Catholic Church.

"I remember when I was younger just having this sense that I was made for something greater than what this world had to offer," the 30-year-old sister said.

As she grew up, her family stopped attending Mass as regularly. She knew something was missing, and she reconnected with her faith in eighth grade after joining a service project at a local Catholic church.

Around that time, she also attended a March for Life youth rally where people considering religious life were asked to stand up. Her heart pounded.

"I had not been thinking about religious life at all," she said. "Interiorly I was like, 'No, no, no.' "

She embraced her faith while studying mechanical engineering and computer science at the University of Maryland. Her friends at the Catholic student center pointed her to the sacraments. She attended Mass, adoration, confession, Bible studies and spiritual direction. She encountered women religious and prayed with Dominican friars.

A pivotal moment came during adoration at a silent retreat. She heard God calling her to be totally his. That moment came after she also attended Steubenville Youth Conferences and FOCUS mission trips.

"I started having this radical desire to just proclaim the truth of God's love, and how this world is passing away, but God's love never, never fades," she said. "I realized the Lord didn't need what I could do for him, he just wanted who I was."

When she visited the Dominican sisters her senior year, she felt at peace. She entered in 2018 at 23, and she currently teaches middle school at a Catholic school in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. She will profess perpetual vows July 25.

When Sr. Concepción Medina of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity was around 2, she confided to her aunt that she wanted to be a religious sister.

Born in and raised in New Mexico, she grew up culturally Catholic with her five siblings. She received the sacraments but did not attend church frequently. She experienced a big moment amid a series of little moments along her path to religious life.

"I found that along the way in life, God was always stirring in my heart to be his alone," the 32-year-old sister said.

In her early 20s, she remembered experiencing "this deep sense of knowing" while singing the Kyrie at Mass.

"I knew with every ounce of my being that God was calling me to religious life and asking me to be exclusively his. ... I was devastated," she said. "This devastation, of course, transformed over time and really was caused by my own selfishness."

God made it obvious that she should join the Franciscan sisters.

"After I had come to visit, the Lord sent St. Francis to shove me in the right direction," she said, adding that she saw images and statues of the saint everywhere. "It wasn't until I gave in and came to visit again that I experienced a deep sense of peace about everything."

She entered at the age of 24. She is currently in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, at the sisters' motherhouse. She is a nurse and cares for the sisters in their infirmary. She will profess perpetual vows Aug. 2 during the Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi.

Sr. Joseph Lucia with the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, spoke from her order's motherhouse in Ann Arbor, Michigan. As one of seven children, she was raised Catholic in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

The 28-year-old sister said the first time she seriously considered a religious vocation came during her confirmation in eighth grade. The bishop gave a talk about vocations and said he was praying her confirmation class would follow the Holy Spirit.

"I remember thinking and praying, 'Jesus, if you want me to be a sister, I'll do it, you'll just have to let me know,' " she said.

She thought about religious life more at the end of her freshman year at Clemson University while studying nursing and Spanish. She began discerning when her older sister entered the Dominican sisters.

"That really inspired me to start thinking again, like, 'Jesus, is this something you're really calling me to?' " she said, remembering her sister's joy.

Her devotion to the Eucharist and Mary drew her to the Dominican sisters. She grew in her love for both at her university, where she attended daily Mass and made time for prayer and adoration. She also realized she was drawn to Dominican spirituality after Dominicans visited her school.

She left college to enter the convent at 21. Today, she teaches at a Catholic school in Findlay, Ohio. She will make her final profession July 28.

"I get to give my whole self to Jesus in response to the totality of love that he's shown to me," she said about being a bride of Christ. "I get to be a visible sign of how much Jesus loves his church, how much Jesus loves each individual soul."

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Sister Phoebe grew up in Alexandria, Virginia, where she now lives as a Daughter of St. Paul. As a girl, she went to their bookstore in that city. Now, she serves there as a sister.

She was raised Catholic with her two sisters and attended her parish's school. The 32-year-old sister experienced "this total instinctive sense of belonging to God" her entire life. At the same time, there were certain lights along the way to religious life. She loved learning about the saints while preparing for confirmation and noticed many were nuns.

Her path was not straightforward: She left the church when she was 18 because she was scandalized by the abuse crisis. During that time, Orthodox Christian friends invited her to their church.

"I am challenged every day by that witness of my Orthodox friends who saw someone who was hurting and said, 'No pressure, you don't have to enter our church, we just want you to know that you're welcome to pray here if that's going to help you stay close to Jesus,' " she said.

She returned to the Roman Catholic Church three years later when, among other things, Pope Francis visited the United States in 2015. His message about reaching out to those on the margins moved her personally.

The Daughters of St. Paul, who seek to communicate Christ, taught her how to pray during their discernment program. Through prayer, she fell in love with Christ. She entered in 2021 when she was 27 after completing a doctorate in Spanish literature and translation at the University of Virginia. She made her first profession Feb. 14, Valentine's Day.

"There are a lot of people who will tell themselves for this or that reason, 'I can't be happy,' " she said. "God loves you exactly the way you are, and he has a plan, and it's better than you can imagine."

All four sisters offered their advice for young women discerning. They recommended letting God lead and spending time with religious women. They suggested praying, reading the Bible and seeking the sacraments. They encouraged women to trust in God.

"Above all," Sr. Concepción Medina said, "fall undeniably in love with God and everything will fall into place."