

Catholic Digest

INSPIRING THE LIFE WE LEAD

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Sisters Schilling, Rawlings, make a pitch for religious vocations

By all accounts Sister Rita Schilling and Sister Diana Rawlings had failed. Another vocation fair had come and gone and the two Sisters had not garnered any new interest in their Order, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. "Nobody would pick up our materials," said Rawlings. So Schilling and Rawlings refined their tactics and began to focus less on brochures and more on building relationships with interested candidates. "We kind of narrowed [our approach] down to: 'What do you think God wants you to do in the next three to five years of your life?'" Rawlings said. "Most of the time people don't know. And the next question is 'Well, would you like some help?'"

Schilling and Rawlings set out to provide this guidance not only to those discerning Religious life but to those struggling with any transition. The result was *LifeChoices*®, a discernment program offered to men and women across the country. Since 1998, 1,549 people have accepted the invitation to explore the next step in their lives with the assistance of Schilling and Rawlings. Many women who contact *LifeChoices*® are discerning a Religious vocation, but there are a variety of other reasons to use this program.

"[The women and men who contact us] are frustrated with what's going on in life. They want



Maria Slizys

REAL ESTATE AGENT

"It's about more than a paycheck."

By: Julie Rattey

During the past two years, Maria Slizys, a real estate agent in California, has been undergoing a spiritual discernment program called *LifeChoices*® offered by the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. The program can be used in many ways – to find ways

to grow in one's spiritual life, to find the right job; to discern a Religious vocation. Catholic Digest spoke with Slizys, 53, about her experience.

Q. What line of work were you in before you got in contact with *LifeChoices*®? What drew you to seek out something different?

A. I had been working in the real estate field for about 15 years and began to wonder if this was where God was continuing to call me. I had been feeling some restlessness regarding my work. Also, my mom, a friend, and a relative all in their 80s and 90s, and I realized that I would become involved in their caregiving. So [I was facing the question], How do I respond to the needs of the people who are dear to me, and how do I perceive this as a call? I also wanted to deepen my relationship with God.

Q. You say you were feeling restless at your job.

A. I think that there is something that people call a mid-life restlessness, you go, Is this all there is? What am I working for? I guess I was at a place where I wanted to reevaluate some life decisions I'd made and see where God is calling me at this time in my life and for the future. I [was looking on the internet] and enjoyed the Web site of the Adorers, and then when I saw this program of *LifeChoices*® I thought, Hmm, this sounds interesting. It wasn't just that I was restless in my job; it was a time of life where I felt that there was a general restlessness happening. I love my work, and as a matter of fact, I feel like this particular program enhanced that.

Q. Can you take us step by step through the process you're going through with *LifeChoices*®?

A. My first contact was an email to Sister Rita Schilling (of the Adorers). I indicated an interest in the program, and she gave me an outline of what the program would entail – a series of questionnaires – and she explained how I should take them. I would send back the completed versions, she would send back the results, and we would discuss them over the phone. I began with the Myers-Briggs (personality) survey, and then a questionnaire that was to help identify spiritual gifts, and a number of others.

There's a lot of information that you give about your background, but all of that works together to give you a holistic sense of who you are. Because as you're completing these questionnaires and looking at the results, little pieces of the puzzle seem to fall into place and you go, "Oh, I see why I react this way" or "Oh, I see where I have a possibility to improve this other part of my life." These questionnaires are really good discernment tools.

something to hold them together, to be with people who have a set of values they esteem,” said Schilling. “They want more in life.”

LifeChoices[®] offers its participants a personality profile and Spiritual Gifts inventory, both of which play major parts in the discernment process and are provided and processed at greatly reduced costs. Schilling returns the results of the profiles “along with an ample amount of material on their charisms and on their gifts that God has given to them to give away.”

But Schilling added that the profiles and articles are only the first step toward change. “You cannot do it alone,” Schilling said. “You have to have friends who will mentor you and make you accountable.” Schilling urges participants to trust in God’s providence, but to remain open to trusting their own intuition as well. “If they’re going to wait for God to tap them on the shoulder and tell them what to do, forget it.”

Sometimes the result of this introspection can be surprising, a fact to which Rawlings can attest. “When [*LifeChoices*[®]] started I was still thinking, Well, this will really get people into the community,” said Rawlings. “But not too long after, it was very clear that that’s really not what God was asking of us. I really believe God was asking us to do discernment, in general, for the good of the whole Church.”

Kerry Weber

IS *LifeChoices*[®] FOR YOU?

To learn more about *LifeChoices*[®], visit
www.adorers.org/lifechoices.aspx
or call 877-ADORERS



www.adorers.org

Q. Did you discover anything unexpected about yourself during the process? How did this change your approach to your life, your career?

A. Perhaps the most involved and interesting part of the program was the spiritual gifts inventory. I had never really delved into the definitions and meanings of the gifts and when I saw the results, I was amazed! Writing and craftsmanship, administrative skills, missionary, celibacy, and a few more things I already sensed were part of my makeup. But now, I began to look at the work I do and the ways I spend my time and really began to see the parts that made my heart sing and the parts that made my heart sing and the parts I tried to avoid, or had to muster the enthusiasm to do.

To give you an example, [in the past] I did work that was more clerical in nature, but I didn’t love it, and I didn’t get joy in it. What I do now, even if I’m dealing with people whose situations aren’t happy ones – if they’re going into an old age home, or maybe they’re having job problems and we have to assist them in selling their home – I still find joy in that I can help them make this transition. It’s a gift, it’s a joy, it’s a ministry as much as it is a job. It isn’t the job that’s more interesting; it’s that you bring your self to the job, and you bring the gifts that you have to the job, which makes it more interesting. You feel like there’s a reason for you to be there; it isn’t just putting in time to get a paycheck.

Q. You mentioned there were some things the surveys indicated you needed to work on. How did you take steps toward that?

A. When I’m coming into a part of my work that is less than exciting – like accounting, which I know I can do but which comes with more difficulty – I can ask God for the grace to do the best I can with it. Instead of grumbling [you develop] a gentler, better approach to work that may not be your forte but you realize you go back to what you normally do with deeper appreciation.

Q. How, daily, did you apply your Catholic faith to this discernment process?

A. I did a lot of these questionnaires while at Eucharistic adoration. I also would take the results and pray about them as I sat before the Blessed Sacrament. And I would take the materials with me in nature as well.

Q. What was your interaction like with the Adorers?

A. It definitely was a delightful experience; very heartwarming, very reassuring and thought-provoking. As a matter of fact, I referred another friend at my parent who is married with children. Hopefully, she’ll take it because it’s got to be really good for anyone in any field in any stage in their life, because it will help you resonate more deeply with your spouse or your work or your family or whatever. It’s one thing to take an employment exam or a personality test or an IQ test, but connecting it to God just makes your whole life have a different outlook. You’re seeing the big picture.

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