

Donna Spader Shire  
(Formerly Sister Madonna Therese)

### *Mother's Vocation and God's Grace*

Of the sixteen children born to my parents, two became priests and I became a nun. From earliest childhood we were taught that the Catholic Church was the only true church, and that in order to one day gain eternal life in heaven, we must be good and do good. My mother's greatest desire was to have at least one of her daughters dedicated to be a nun. I was chosen to be that daughter. I attended parochial high school and, immediately following graduation in 1960, entered the convent of the School Sisters of St. Francis in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Life in the convent was severe and strict. We were taught about the saints of the church and Church doctrine, but not the Scriptures. I received my first Bible after ten years in the convent. It was not put into my hands by the Catholic Church, but by a group of charismatics.

#### **My Brother Shares**

My younger brother had come to know the Lord through a crusade. He had left engineering school and was attending Moody Bible Institute. He came to visit me often and shared his new-found faith. Through Ephesians 2:8-9 he tried to convince me that salvation is a free gift which can only be obtained by trusting Christ alone and that our good deeds do not save us, as is stated so clearly in Scripture, "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he has saved us*" (Titus 3:5). It was obvious that my brother had the assurance of eternal life that I so desperately desired, but I could not believe that my church had misled me in such an important issue.

#### **The Convent and Empty Religion**

For five years I searched to find peace and happiness on my own. I tried yoga, transcendental meditation, Silva mind control, tongues and prophesying. Each seemed to satisfy for a time, but in the end, left a spiritual void. After fifteen years in the convent, and still not finding the peace with God for which I had longed, I began seriously to question my life as a

religious. I had entered the convent believing that there I could be “good” enough. However, I found that even in a convent the nuns sin just as women do in the world.

### **Change of Habits**

In 1975 I wrote to the Pope and received his permission to be released from my vows. In leaving the convent I felt as though I had failed myself, my family, and my Church. Rather than returning home, I went to the East coast to live with a friend who was also an ex-nun. The two of us chose to make up for all our years of cloistered life by trying everything that the world had to offer. It did not take long to see that the worldly life has nothing to offer, either.

### **Direct Prayer**

One evening when I returned to our apartment, I found my friend in real trouble. She had been drinking and smoking marijuana and was in a rage. She seemed to want to end her life completely. I became frightened, the more I tried to calm her down, the violent and angry she became. Finally, in desperation, I grabbed her and began praying. I believe that this was the first time I had ever prayed directly to God, bypassing the Blessed Mother and the Saints. In doing so, God heard my prayer and immediately she calmed down.

### **Amazing Grace**

We decided that night to find out the truth about God. We knelt down and sincerely asked Him for help and forgiveness. We asked Him to straighten out the mess that we had made of our lives, for like the prophet Isaiah; we saw that our righteousness was as filthy rags. We were not familiar with terms such as “saved” and “born again”, but from that moment I began to experience, for the first time in my life, His peace “that passes understanding”. From that time on there was an obvious change in my heart and life. The Word of God became a light unto my path, where before it had been confusing. Verses took on new meaning, such as, “*in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*” (Ephesians 1:7). “*But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*”, “*For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*” (Romans 5:8, 10).

Since my conversion to Jesus Christ, God has blessed me in many ways. I attended a Bible school in England where I received very sound doctrinal teaching. I was given a trip to the Holy Land, where I had the joy of walking where my Lord walked centuries ago and where I received a better perspective of Scripture. I have been a counselor with a family agency, have married (a widowed man), and am not only a wife, but a mother of five and a grandmother of ten.

Each day, whether in good or difficult circumstance, like Isaiah, I can say, “*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels*” (Isaiah 61:10).

Perhaps you too have concluded that a religious life can not earn salvation. If you want to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, believe in Him and His death, burial and resurrection which paid your sin debt in full and receive the gift of salvation that He freely offers by grace through faith. “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding,*

*that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:20-21).*

Know that eternal life is in Christ and Him alone; looking to and praying to all others is idolatry. Obey God’s warning in Scripture. *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power”* (Colossians 2:8-10). All that is necessary to secure your salvation is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a completion in Him, so as to leave nothing wanting. There is no necessity therefore that you should look to religious life or the Catholic church as if there were a deficiency in our Savior, as if He were unable to save you. He is waiting for you to trust Him, and then indeed in Him you will be complete! Do it now, you will forever thank Him!