

Sister Olin's story: Detoured but undeterred

COTTONWOOD — Novice Wendy Olin of St. Gertrude Monastery is now Sister Wendy Olin after her first monastic profession July 24.

"My life has been full of detours and derailments," said Sister Wendy Olin, "but God has placed people and faithful communities along the way to help me get back on track."

Raised in Reno, Nev., it wasn't until she attended the University of Nevada, Reno, that Sister Olin entered a Catholic church for the first time. A sorority sister asked her for a ride to the hospital to visit her grandmother who was in critical health. On the way home, she asked Sister Olin to drop her off at the cathedral so she could attend Mass. When they got there, her friend asked her to come in with her. Never having set foot in a Catholic church, Sister Olin was reluctant. She agreed, however, feeling it would help comfort her friend.

When they got to the door of the church, Sister Olin froze. "I will not genuflect, I will not cross myself and I will not kneel," she blurted.

Inside the cathedral, however,



DURING FORMATION— As a novice, Benedictine Sister Wendy Olin studied with Formation Director Sister Agnes Reichlin. (ICR photo courtesy of St. Gertrude Monastery)

examine the possibility of a calling to the religious life. She felt she was ready, but something was standing in her way, and he had four legs.

Levi was a blue heeler cross who had been Wendy's devoted companion for 10 years. Blue heelers are known for bonding with one specific person, and she knew that finding him a good home would be important for him.

"I told God that if He found a good home for Levi, I'd know that entering St. Gertrude's was the right thing to do," she recalled.

Some friends were eager to take Levi, but they were a family of three with three dogs already. Any hesitation she felt melted away when one of the family's dogs died just before Levi went to live with them, freeing a human heart to bond with Sister Olin's beloved Levi.

She became a postulant at St. Gertrude's in 2006. There have been times she doubted her suitability for the monastic life, she said, but "I know this is where God wants me to be."

A camp counselor, school bus driver, truck driver, teacher and nursing student, Sister Olin is comfortable with change. She has worked in the monastery archives, taught religious education for the local parish and recently began serving as curator at the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude.

trude's in particular, but felt she wasn't holy or worthy enough. It wasn't time.

Sister Olin returned to college, entering the nursing program at Boise State University. After much prayer, she began to re-



JUBILIARIANS RENEW VOWS — Benedictine Sisters Placida Wemhoff and Carol Ann Wassmuth renew their monastic vows in the Monastery of St. Gertrude chapel June 11. The two have been members of the community for 50 years. (ICR photo courtesy of St. Gertrude Monastery)

the hair stood up on the back of her neck and she felt the overwhelming presence of something bigger than herself. She returned to attend Mass every week afterward and joined the Catholic Church in 1975.

Two years later, her life took a detour when she graduated from college and got her first elementary teaching job in Grand View. Away from her family, friends and home, Sister Olin fell away from the church.

While attending a teacher's workshop in Sun Valley, she met Benedictine Sister Mary Anne Glodowski. They became friends and Sister Glodowski invited her to visit St. Gertrude's in 1986.

"From the moment I walked into the chapel, I felt I belonged here," Sister Olin recalled. "I felt I'd prayed those prayers and sung those songs before."

She met Sister Glodowski's biological sister, Benedictine Sister Barbara Jean Glodowski, during her stay at the monastery, and afterward began making regular trips to Boise to see Sister Barbara Jean for spiritual direction. Sister Olin was drawn to the monastic life and to St. Ger-



PROUD PARENTS — Beverly and Justin Olin of Reno, Nev., witnessed their daughter Sister Wendy Olin profess her first monastic vows at St. Gertrude Monastery in Cottonwood July 24. (ICR photo courtesy of St. Gertrude Monastery)

Woman overcoming obstacles in pursuit of vocation

By Sandra Loera



I was baptized Catholic but raised in a family that neither taught me about the faith nor the importance of God in my life. As I grew older, I assumed I would get married and have children because that is what my five siblings did. I went through

life expecting to become a doctor and eventually a wife and mother. I attended Boise State University to study medicine and fulfill my dreams. However, God had other plans.

Two years ago, I met a person who would become my best friend and help me recognize God's plan for me. God unveiled his beauty to me through her and placed a new desire in my heart. I struggled for a while until I realized that I had to change what I was doing and what I wanted to become if I wanted to come closer to God. So, I chose a different major and left behind everything I knew to follow God. With my friend's help, I became involved at St. Paul Catholic Student Center and met amazing

people who inspired my new-found faith. With this came a multitude of graces.

As I continued my faith journey, the desire God placed in me continued to stir my soul until I responded to his grace and recognized my longing to give myself fully to him in the consecrated life. My longing has been nourished by the sacraments, nurtured by the faithful and blossomed into an ever-deepening desire.

God has responded generously, taking me many places to experience what my vocation could be like. The community that has left the deepest impression on me has been the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville, Tenn. With a life rooted deep in Catholic tradition and a joyful enthusiasm for teaching, they have drawn me toward them in a beautiful way. I hope that if it is God's will, I may apply to enter soon.

This journey to discover where God is calling me has required overcoming obstacles. As I continue to pray for my family's support, I also must face the reality that I cannot enter the convent until I retire my student loan debt. It is an obstacle that I must continually place in God's hands and a challenge that deepens my faith. It has been a beautiful reminder that I am not alone in my struggle, but that I am constantly being carried in his loving arms.



God S callN U !

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