

19 voices

Concordia congregation adapts as more women are called to join

When Amanda Wahlmeier and Emily Brito were welcomed into the Sisters of St. Joseph in mid-November, they were also welcomed into a new approach for preparing women for religious life.

Since the Concordia congregation began welcoming candidates for agrégée membership in 2006, there have been two "tracks" of what was traditionally called "formation:"

➤ For "canonically vowed sisters," it was a formal process that included one year as a postulant and two years as a novice before professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

➤ For "agrégée sisters," it was a less formal but still structured process that generally lasted about three years before professing a single vow of fidelity to the congregation and to God.

Taken together, 19 women have come to the community in these eight years, most as candidates for agrégée membership and two as canonical sisters.

But the new approach does away with the distinction between the two tracks — at least for the first two years.

With the new "Preparation and Integration Program," Amanda and Emily were welcomed

into the congregation together as candidates and will continue preparing for religious life together.

As they enter their third year, each candidate will decide which direction she is called to — either canonical or agrégée.

At that point, canonical candidates — who in that final year of preparation will be called "novices" — will complete the study and other requirements of the Church as a woman religious. The agrégée candidates in their third year will continue the study required by the congregation to be received into the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The two forms of membership are the same in almost every aspect, but there are two significant differences:

➤ "Canonically vowed sisters" profess the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, as defined by canon — or Church — law. As part of the vow of poverty, an individual sister relinquishes all personal wealth and income; at the same time, the congregation assumes com-

plete responsibility for her economic well being for the rest of her life.

➤ "Agrégée sisters" profess a vow of fidelity to the congregation, but it is noncanonical, meaning that it is not governed by Church law and is instead a private vow between that sister and the Concordia congregation. And while it encompasses the three canonical vows, they are applied somewhat differently. The agrégée is called to live a frugal lifestyle, but she does not relinquish her finances to the congregation, and the congregation assumes no financial responsibility for her.



Amanda Wahlmeier, in pink at left, receives a hug from Sister Pat McLennon, while Emily Brito, in white, is hugged by Sister Esther Pineda as Sister Carm Thibault looks on. Amanda and Emily were welcomed as the newest candidates in a simple ceremony at the Motherhouse in November.

Canonically vowed sisters have traditionally begun their religious life with a formal "formation" during which they left their previous life and lived as part of the congregation. Agrégée candidates did not leave behind their outside lives. Instead, they met with mentors and studied around their regular work

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Listen...

These quotes are from past articles on individual sisters, to help you understand what drew them to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

"There's a belonging, an inner strength, a different kind of energy, a greater confidence in what I'm about and what I'm doing... That all feels like part of the mystery of religious life in today's world."

— SISTER ROSEMARY FOREMAN, TOPEKA
Professed as an agrégée sister in August 2009

"I'd never heard of the word *agrégée* before, but I loved what I heard. It was consistent with how I lived my life."

— SISTER SHARON HAYES, KANSAS CITY, MO.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2011

"I am always restless, always looking for something that will capture all of my energy, and my spirit. This is it; this captures all of me."

— SISTER JULIE CHRISTENSEN, CONCORDIA
Professed as a canonical sister in June 2010

"I think what is happening within me is what's happening within religious life. ... We're evolving, and it's an exciting time. There are so many women thirsting for God, thirsting for their own spirituality and a community to belong to. Like me, they may be afraid — but they don't have to be. We can be here for them."

— DIAN HALL, CARTERSVILLE, GA.
Entered as an agrégée candidate in November 2010; then entered the canonical novitiate in June 2013

"Among the Concordia sisters I found such kindness and love, and such a sense of belonging. I was overwhelmed. This is the community — the aura of community — I had been looking for without even realizing it."

— SISTER SUSAN KLEPPER, ST. LOUIS
Professed as an agrégée sister in November 2012

"I love God and I love God's people, and this is my avenue for expressing that love. Being an agrégée is about my relationship with God."

— SISTER ANN ASHWOOD, GRAND JUNCTION, COLO.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2010

"This really is a calling from God. And it's shown me that what God wants, God gets — even if it takes a lifetime."

— SISTER JEAN ANN WALTON, AUGUSTA, KAN.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2010

"Part of the appeal of the agrégées is to be in a community of women who are making a commitment to live the Gospels. That means caring for the poor and loving our neighbors; those are the values, and lessons, I find in the Sisters of St. Joseph."

— SISTER BETH WEDDLE, CONCORDIA
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2013

Sisters & candidates

These are the women who make up the 19 new voices (listed alphabetically by last name) in the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.



Sister Ann Ashwood
Grand Junction, Colo.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2010



Emily Brito
Bosque Farms, N.M.
Received as a candidate in November 2013



Christina Brodie
Concordia
Received as an agrégée candidate in Nov. 2012



Sister Julie Christensen
Concordia
Professed as a canonical sister in June 2010



Sister Rosabel Flax
Ness City, Kan.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2008



Sister Rosemary Foreman
Topeka, Kan.
Professed as an agrégée sister in August 2009



Sister Dian Hall
Cartersville, Ga.
Received as an agrégée candidate in 2010, then entered the canonical novitiate in June 2013



Sister Lorren Harbin
Fruita, Colo.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2012



Sister Sharon Hayes
Kansas City, Mo.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2011



Teresa Hernandez
Salina, Kan.
Received as an agrégée candidate in Nov. 2012



Sister Susan Klepper
St. Louis, Mo.
Professed as an agrégée sister in November 2012



Sister Jan McCormick
Chapman, Kan.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2011



Crystal Payment
Douglasville, Ga.
Received as an agrégée candidate in Nov. 2011



Sister Kathy Schaefer
Augusta, Kan.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2012



Denise Schmitz
Newton, Kan.
Received as an agrégée candidate in Nov. 2012



Kathy Stairs
Elizabeth, Colo.
Received as an agrégée candidate in Nov. 2012



Amanda Wahlmeier
Concordia
Received as a candidate in November 2013



Sister Jean Ann Walton
Augusta, Kan.
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2010



Sister Beth Weddle
Concordia
Professed as an agrégée sister in June 2013