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Shelby Burroughs

Sister Rebecca: The True Value of Women

Abstract: This paper includes part of an interview with Sister Rebecca, a Salesian who has worked in education for the last 10 years, and her views on the roles that women religious play in the lives of people.

I had the opportunity to interview a Salesian woman religious named Sister Rebecca. This interview was conducted to look at the life of a woman religious and her role in the community. I asked her a range of questions attempting to gain as much insight as I could regarding what Sister Rebecca had to say about her experiences as a woman religious. From politics to commonly-held stereotypes, Sister Rebecca covered a wide range of enlightening topics while talking about her life.

My first question was on her most rewarding moments as a woman religious thus far. Sister Rebecca is motivated to see the betterment of women in this country. The Salesian sisters were founded specifically for the education of girls, although they work with boys and girls now depending on where they are. "I really see our young women in our country having a great need to understand the beauty and dignity of womanhood; their potentials, their gifts, to be encouraged to live them out, to reject the culture's image of a woman's value being solely based on beauty, how much money you have and really encouraging them to go deeper in their faith to embrace their struggles." Her most important moments have come from having these sorts of conversations with young girls that may be struggling with their faith or have struggles in their family and giving them spiritual guidance, praying with them, or just being a listening ear over a

cup of tea. She has had a number of past students come up to her and tell her years later that those moments that she spent with them were the most impactful in their lives. She believes that this kind of work is helpful because we live in a world where young people lose their voice and people share their thoughts and opinions on Facebook and Twitter because there is this realization that their voice is not being heard so they are looking for validation and encouragement. Having an adult take this time and be there for a child can be very impactful.

When asked if there are any misconceptions about religious life that she would like to clear up, Sister Rebecca went on to say that one of the biggest misconceptions is that women enter the religious life because they cannot do anything else or that maybe they failed at relationships or weren't very successful in the professional world. These statements couldn't be further from the truth. Almost all the women religious life have had positive experiences with dating, had very successful careers, and had a future. Religious life was not simply an escape from something, religious life is about looking at their life as something good and realizing that God was calling them to something else just as good. She goes on to say, "You have to be a very self-aware and confident woman to be a woman religious because you are called to be present to so many different types of people and you are stretched in so many different ways. And in that process of being stretched and called to love so many different types of people, your natural gifts are put to the test and then God gives you the supernatural gifts that you need in order to serve in his name." One of the most powerful statements that Sister Rebecca said to me during the interview that really stuck with me was, "I meet a lot of people that say 'Oh my gosh, you are so pretty, why didn't you get married?' or 'You're so smart, you could have been in charge of a

company!' It's like, yes, I could have been, but that's not what I was called to do and my happiness is here."

The idea that a woman's happiness has to be tied to her connection to a man is something that women religious defy. In no way is becoming a woman religious a "way out" because they could not do any better. Women religious do extraordinary things and I do not believe that they get enough credit as they deserve. From teaching immigrants in need to being a leader in teaching at the all-girls private school, Sister Rebecca shows that being a woman religious is not an easy job but it is one that has applications throughout all facets of society.

Work Cited

Jacobson, Rebecca. "Woman Religious Interview." 2 Jan. 2018.