

### What It Takes To Be A Sister of Perpetual Indulgence

Most often the Sisters are seen out having a good time, looking fabulous and enjoying ourselves. However, what is not often seen is the great deal of work that each Sister does. Similarly, we are often associated with fundraising. Although we do a lot of fundraising, that is not our mission and our work spans a lot of other areas.

In addition to fundraising, the work of a Sister also includes ministry, education and entertainment. We organize, plan and throw events, some of which are very large and complex. The Sisters regularly visit local hospices, bringing joy to the people there. We also have some very intense one-on-one sessions with the people we meet while out. Ours is a "ministry of presence". The Sisters frequently act as educators, lecturing to classrooms of students and informing the cute boy at the bar about the risks of unsafe sex. And if you've ever been to one of our bingo games or any other event that is hosted by the Sisters, you have seen us in our role as MC and hostess. Being a Sister requires a lot of different skills and an investment in time, energy and money.

In evaluating a potential new member, we look at a number of things. We look for drive, passion and commitment; a desire to perform community service; the ability to handle many tasks with grace; honesty and a genuine character; good people skills and the ability to interact with others in a meaningful way. However, having the drive and skills is not enough. The Order is made up of over 30 people who all must be able to work together smoothly and efficiently. We are far from perfect and, like any family, often have our misunderstandings. Despite that, we all work towards our common goals and often can make miracles happen. A new member must be able to mesh with the Order and should add to the group dynamic, not detract from it.

We are more than just another community service organization: **we are Sisters**. As with our more traditional counterparts, nearly all of us felt a genuine calling to do this work. There is room for a lot of fun in the Order, but we take our callings and our vows very seriously. The majority of Sisters consider this a lifelong vocation; the path may twist and turn, the outer manifestation may change, but the commitment to service never waivers. Being a Sister can be one of the most challenging and demanding things you can ever do but it also offers some rich and enlightening rewards.

### Becoming A Sister of Perpetual Indulgence

If you are interested in joining the Order, we recommend that you attend our events, observe Sisters in action and engage them in conversation. Reading about being a Sister on a website pales in comparison to watching a Sister at work or hearing her individual story. Getting a better idea of who we are and what we do will help you to decide if this is the path for you. And getting to know the Sisters can serve you well as you move through the process.

Your path towards Sisterhood starts with a conversation with the [Mistress of Novices](#). During this conversation, the Novice Mistress will assess your motivations for approaching the Order and try to determine if you will be a good fit. If she believes that you have potential, you

will be asked to attend one of our general membership meetings. At that time you can declare your Aspirancy. If she feels that you are not a good fit for the Order, do not be discouraged; the desire to do community service is an admirable one and San Francisco offers a lot of opportunities to do so.

There are four steps to becoming a Sister and the entire process takes at least one year.

### **Aspirant**

Aspirancy begins when you declare your intent to join at one of our general membership meetings. It lasts for at least two months; during this time you should be developing relationships with the Sisters, participating in our events and watching how we work and operate. At this stage you are not a member and have no rights within the Order. If we both decide that you are a good fit, you will need to get the Novice Mistress' recommendation and select two Fully Professed Members to be your sponsors (we call them your **Big Sisters**). The Membership then votes on your elevation; if you get a majority vote you are elevated to Postulant.

### **Postulant**

As a Postulant, you are a Member of the Order although you still have no voting rights. In addition to continuing to further your relationships within the Order, you are required to attend all of our meetings, many of our events and you must spend at least six hours in our Archives learning the history of the Order. Your uniform is a white cassock and your makeup should be a "mask." You cannot wear a wimple or veil. Postulancy last for at least six months. Near the end of that time, if the Order still agrees that you are a good fit, you will need to find a Fully Professed Member to be your main sponsor (your **Mother**). With the Novice Mistress' recommendation and the sponsorship of your Mother, you will be brought up for elevation. Should you get the two-thirds vote required, you will be elevated to Novice.

### **Novice Sister**

The Novitiate begins to manifest the outward appearance of a Sister. A Novice wears the whiteface and wimple, although she is only allowed to wear a pure white veil. Despite this, the general public still perceives you to be a Sister and your interactions will radically change. The Novitiate lasts for at least six months. During this time you are a member without rights, you must attend every meeting, nearly all of our events and you must spend eight hours in our Archives. With you Mother's help, you must also plan, organize and throw an event. Once you complete the requirements and have the Novice Mistress' and your Mother's support, you may ask to be elevated to Fully Professed status. As with the other steps, you will be voted upon by the membership; should you receive the three-fourths vote required, you will be elevated to Black Veil.

### **Fully Professed (Black Veil)**

Although this is the last step in the formal process of *becoming* a Sister, it is the first step towards *being* a Sister. As a Fully Professed Member of the Order, you have all of the rights and privileges of a Member: you may vote, represent the Order and manifest as you feel called to do so. Fully Professed Members also may hold office and help shape the direction and development of the Order. Our

Fully Professed Members serve the Order in many different roles; taken as a whole, they make the Order what it is.

Still interested in becoming a Sister? Start by getting in touch with our [Mistress of Novices](#) . If you live outside of San Francisco, check to see if there is an [Order of Sisters](#) near you. You could also contemplate becoming a Missionary Order. Contact our [Mistress of Missions](#) for more information.