

Whether a School of Theology for Sisters is Necessary.

Sister Mary Cletus

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Introduction: Appointment received in February, 1948.

Dear Sister, You have been appointed to study during the coming summer at the School of Theology for Sisters, Providence College.

Soliloquy: School of Theology ! Whatever for? I wanted so much to continue my studies in German at Catholic University. What use shall I have for theology? Oh well, God knows what He is doing.

Interlude: Summer of 1948.

Late August, 1948.

What were you doing this summer?

Studying theology at the School of Theology for Sisters, at Providence College. And am I happy about it !

Theology ! What do nuns want with theology?

Almost an exact repetition of what I said when I received the appointment. But that was because I did not have a proper understanding of the purpose and scope of the School.

Well, let us hear something about it.

My dear Sisters, nuns (I said nuns, but the School of Theology has taught me that I was in error) have to teach truth. It is necessary that those who teach should have more explicit knowledge and understanding of the doctrines to be taught than is ordinarily the case. By the studies offered at the Theological School the Sisters are grounded in the great truths of religion; they are also given reasons for the faith that is in them. Priests who are steeped in the Thomistic Theology give untiringly of their abundance in order that the Sisters may not only acquire certain knowledge, but also that they may be enabled to present these great truths to others with certitude and confidence. For the latter purpose seminars are held every week in which the sisters are given opportunities to discuss and to question.

But sisters have been teaching religion for years without all this deep theological knowledge. Why is it so necessary now?

True, Sisters have been teaching religion for years and have been doing a very good job, but as the Holy Father Leo XIII has said it is now in these days that it is in the highest degree necessary to be able to refute heresies and confirm dogmas. Secularism and materialism are rampant in the world today, and this School of Theology is trying to do something to offset both. It invites the members of the Sisterhood to drink at the source and to take to those who will come under their care the means by which the youth of today will be able to maintain their faith in God's truth.

We see your point, but are the sisters able to appreciate these courses? You would not need to ask if you could see with what avidity they listen to their professors and with what concentration they study the Summa. The study of the Summa gives one insight into some things that we as teachers might easily skip over. To take just one instance we notice especially St. Thomas' method of explaining the meaning of words. He first gives the general meaning, then the meaning some others take, and finally the sense in which he will use the word.

Anything more in favor of your school?

Oh yes, many more things in its favor, but here are two important ones. The school also offers every spiritual help for the sisters' personal advancement. Personal holiness should be a mark of every religious teacher. Here this fact is important. The atmosphere is redolent of charity and peace.

In a school of such intense study and spiritual life it is fitting that the mind unbend at times and give itself to the less serious but not less necessary side of life; so recreational activities are provided that one may return to the work of the school year renewed intellectually, spiritually and physically.

Soliloquy: I thank God daily for the appointment of February, 1948.