



ANSWERING the Call

Nano Nagle showed
how to listen for God

By Natalie Slieter

“I identify my own ‘being called’ when becoming a Cojourner. Traveling to Ireland this past summer and being in the places where Nano lived and did her work, actually revealed to me that I am in a place God wants me. I understand my Christian accountability differently now. Today, I ‘must’ be an extension of the heart and hands of those who have ministered before, Nano, the Presentation Sisters, and our loving Creator.”

- Carrie Hansen,
Presentation Cojourner
and Cojourner Coordinator

Nano Nagle lived in Ireland during the 1700s, a time of oppression in the Catholic church. Those who were Catholic were not allowed to be educated, which resulted in them living in extreme poverty. Nano was raised in a prominent family and attended school in Paris where she was able to receive a Catholic education and enjoy a luxurious lifestyle.

However, she felt God nudging her to help the poor and the needy back in Ireland. She was torn between continuing an easier life in Paris or educating those who were being oppressed. The cost of starting an illegal school to teach Catholics in Ireland was high; it meant putting her and her family in danger of being thrown in jail.

“She was pulled between what she wanted to do and what the Irish people needed her to do,” Sister Elaine Garry explained. “She

struggled for a long time.”

Nano spent time praying and seeking God and His will for her life. She answered God’s prompting and returned to Ireland to begin educating Catholics, despite the risks. As expected, answering the call didn’t come without its challenges.

She elicited the assistance of nuns in France, but they were unable to go out to help the children as they were considered cloistered nuns, meaning they were to stay at the convent. So, Nano returned to God to ask what the next step was. Through her prayer, and after much struggle, she found other women willing to begin an order of sisters who could go out amongst the people with her.

Sister Elaine said that Nano focused on listening to the needs of the people at the time and listening to what God was calling her to do. This process of discerning was modeled by Nano and

is a practice the Presentation Sisters continue to follow today. Sister Elaine said it starts with asking God what He wants you to do and then to pray about it. Then, write down the pros and cons of each potential choice. Finally, listen and look inside to see which decision brings inner peace, and then make a choice.

“It’s a simple way of looking at discernment. It’s asking, ‘what has God planned for me?’ and then listening inside,” Sister Elaine said.

Sister Elaine believes following the discernment process allows you to seek God first to understand what He wants for your life and how He wants you to live. It can be difficult to listen at times, but once you make your decision and find inner peace, you can respond to the needs of those around you.



Sister Elaine Garry works in Parish Ministry at St. Thomas More in Brookings. She enjoys finding quiet in her day to listen to where God is calling her next. To learn more about Sister Elaine or the Presentation Sisters, please visit www.presentationisters.org.