



## GSR in the Classroom: VOCATIONS

# GUIDE – THE LOVE BEHIND HER VOWS

**SUMMARY:** A woman about to enter religious life recognizes her love as “perfectly imperfect,” inspiring us to reflect on ourselves and the love we give and share.

### BACKGROUND:

We live in an imperfect world. While certain things can be precise, such as the time kept by a bride’s smartphone, her plans for a “perfect” wedding might be undone by problems with weather, the groom’s car or many other factors. As a teacher, your joy over a student’s perfect score on a test might be overwhelmed by the results of struggling students. People use filters on social media to create unrealistically perfect images of themselves. Perfection is so hard to achieve, yet it’s the goal or expectation of so many people in so many situations.

That includes something as wonderful and uncontrollable as love. Many people hope for a perfect friendship or a perfect romantic fit – a perfect life together. But humans are human, not perfect. By embracing that reality rather than expecting perfection in those we love, we open ourselves to growing more deeply and strongly together.

### FOCUS:

Expectations of perfection might also ring true for people entering religious life. They’ll discover, however, that their attempts to love God or to love other people aren’t perfect, just as others love them imperfectly. A person’s discernment of their vocation includes acceptance of God’s perfect love for us as well as the flaws and potential in our human love.

### ACTIVITY:

Hand-write the following sentence for your students to see, *exactly* as written:

*It occured to Colleen, not long before she was to publically take her vows as a sister, that her heart could never accomodate the immense love she had recieved from God.*

Then say: “This sentence perfectly captures the feelings of a young woman about to commit herself to religious life. Well, not quite perfectly. What might be wrong with it?”

Take responses. If no one catches the misspellings, write this sentence:

*Are any words in this sentence misspelled?*

Point out that the words “occurred,” “publicly,” “accommodate” and “received” are misspelled (as is “misspelled” in the hint sentence!).

Then say: “Don’t feel too bad if you didn’t catch all of the misspellings in the sentence. These words consistently are found on lists of the most commonly misspelled words. So you’re not alone if you didn’t catch them all, or any of them!”

## DISCUSSION:

Ask the following series of questions, taking time for a brief discussion of each:

- Will your ability to spell those words affect your ability to leave this room when this session is over?
- Will it affect your potential success in college or in your career?
- Will it affect your potential to find love?
- Could the ability to spell those four words ever mean the difference between life and death?
- Will the ability to spell influence your eternal salvation?

If students answer “yes” or “maybe” to any of these questions, ask again, substituting “the ability to dunk a basketball,” “the ability to juggle” or any other skill.

Then say: “It’s often said that ‘nobody’s perfect,’ yet we often expect perfection of ourselves and others. Spelling, like a lot of skills, is important, but a goof here and there – especially with spellcheck to back us up – probably won’t change our lives.

“Our expectations are especially high when it comes to love. We want the best for ourselves and want to present our best selves to others. That should be true, even in our relationship with God.”

Ask, again, taking time to invite students to explain their answers:

- Can we expect perfection in another person?
- Can we expect perfection in ourselves?
- Can our expectations cause us to lose hope in or give up on loving relationships?

Conclude by saying:

“Recognizing that God is love, and that God’s love alone is perfect, is half of the blessing. Perhaps more challenging is to recognize human flaws – those of others and our own – not as deal-breakers but as opportunities for the love we give and share to grow deeper and stronger. However we are called to love, the journey toward a more perfect love is accepting imperfections.

## PRAYER:

Lord, you create all things and recognize their goodness.  
You make us in your image and likeness, yet not without our flaws.  
Your love for us is perfect, though we are not.  
Help us Lord, to accept our goodness, our worthiness of your love.  
Give us patience with ourselves and with others, warts and all.  
Give us strength to trust in you and hope that we might love you and others more faithfully.  
Amen.

