

Molly McKinstry: [00:00](#) Habits are who we are, and we get to choose everyday who that is. What's remarkable about these women is that their habits are changing the world. Hi and welcome to Habits, The Good, The Bad, and The Holy. I'm Molly and I'm sitting down every week with Adorers of the Blood of Christ religious sisters to hear their stories and learn how habits have become more than a symbol for their vocation. They become the means to which they change lives. Hello everyone and Habits, The Good, The Bad, and The Holy. We are kicking off this podcast with an incredible interview with Vicki Bergkamp, who is our fearless leader. Vicki, thanks for sitting down with me. It's very nice to join you all. Uh, can you explain what your title is and why I call you our fearless leader?

Vicki Bergkamp: [00:47](#) Uh, the title is called the regional leader of the United States region. And that means that, um, all the sisters in the United States plus the sisters that are in areas that we sponsor. For example, we have a mission in Bolivia and we have a mission in Korea and we're starting one in Vietnam. So any of those sisters belong to a group that is called the US region. So I coordinate or lead or whatever needs to be done for that group of women.

Molly McKinstry: [01:19](#) They're all your minions.

Vicki Bergkamp: [01:21](#) No, none of them are my minions

Molly McKinstry: [01:24](#) because y'all have a very collaborative way that you will act leadership. So, um, every six years a new leadership team is elected. But I think elected is the right word, but it's not the connotation that we use today. Can you explain just kind of briefly what that, why that process is different than what we would see in like a US election?

Vicki Bergkamp: [01:47](#) Um, I think the leader, and not just my position, but the four counselors that are also elected at the same time, we use the word election, but it really is more of a concept of being chosen by the group for a period of leadership time. So if we talk a lot about what is going to happen in the next six years, what are the skills of the people that are available and willing. And then we try to match that together and we say to each other, okay, I think you are the person who could help us during this period of time.

Molly McKinstry: [02:22](#) So you really come together and look at what's best for the individuals in the community. Right, exactly. So Vicki, who are the doors of the blood of Christ.

- Vicki Bergkamp: [02:32](#) Yeah. Adorers of the blood of Christ are a group of an international community of women who, um, were started by a woman named Maria de Mattias in the 18 hundreds in Italy. And um, the, the charism which we use that word to talk about our character,
- Molly McKinstry: [02:53](#) right. It's almost like, um, a company would have a mission or vision statement. Charism is sister speak, which I use a lot throughout, uh, the next episodes y'all will hear, um, as a, a bit of a translation for the non sisters.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [03:07](#) Yeah. So the charism is something we always identifying. Go back to and to the charism of this community is about, uh, reconciliation and taking care of the, Maria de Mattias used the phrase dear neighbor, which was a, a term that many people in the 1800s who started religious communities. That phrase was used and it, it gets at that idea that you can't do something important if you're ignoring the person next to you. So the charism is really finding the ministry's finding the places we want to be where we can serve the neighbor as well as quote do something.
- Molly McKinstry: [03:48](#) Right. Um, so this podcast is a new venture for the ASCs. Can you talk about how it came to be?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [03:58](#) Well, we hired this communications director who is significantly younger than any of us are only by a couple of years, mostly by decades, company of decades. Um, we, we've been aware for a long time that social media is a very important, a communication device. And, and you as communication director have helped us focus in on this and it's your creativity that has brought this about,
- Molly McKinstry: [04:26](#) hey everyone. Molly here. I just wanted to step in for a second. Vicki misspoke. Just is not going to go when she called me the communication director and I do want to clear that up. Sure. What an hour is the communication structure? I am the communications associate and together reform the communications team. And now back to the interview.
- Molly McKinstry: [04:43](#) I yes, I'm very excited and this is going to be every week we're sitting down and talking with different ASC, which is the abbreviation for Adorers of the blood of Christ and hearing y'all's stories, the ministries you've done the missions you've done, but also your lives as humans alongside your lives as sisters.

- Vicki Bergkamp: [05:06](#) I would like to tell the story about why we're called ASC. If you called us by our English name, adorers of the blood of Christ would be the ABC sisters. We don't really want to be the ABC sisters. Right. So we used the Latin, which is, adores de sanguines de cristo and also because we're an international community, so the ASC, it makes sense when you understand that piece of information.
- Molly McKinstry: [05:32](#) We're going to do some Q and A's at the end, but I'm going to run through really quickly some questions that I get super often as a baseline for I probably every person that's not assessed or listening to this. So the biggest difference between, um, a full fledged sister and, uh, the other parts of our ASC family is this idea of vows. Um, can you talk about what vows the ASC take and what those as kind of look like in just in everyday life?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [06:01](#) All right. Uh, all religious communities following Canon law and the church have the three vows of, um, poverty, chastity and obedience. And so, um,
- Molly McKinstry: [06:13](#) and for all of you people that just like winced, just like keep, just hold on a second. Just listen because it's in, it doesn't look the way I thought it looked and I'm excited to, yeah, cause I didn't grow up around sisters. I grew up Catholic, but I didn't interact with sisters. And so I started working here. And so I've really enjoyed learning what those vows and the charism look I can daily life and it's very different than what I envisioned in my head.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [06:37](#) Okay. I hope I answered this right.
- Molly McKinstry: [06:39](#) I'm sure you will.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [06:41](#) Chastity used to actually I think in some old arguments would've been called virginity. So a chastity is the idea that we make a vow not to, um, basically not to get married, that we live a celibate life. Now, uh, all of us live the live, the virtue of chastity. We all make full lifetime commitments and we live within that. So that's what we've done is made that commitment that my life energy is going to go to the mission and the charism of this community, not into a personal relationship like marriage would be all right. Poverty is, um, is, is maybe in this misnomer, but I would agree with that. After I've learned, if we share our goods in common, so my salary, I don't see my salary, my salary comes to the community.

- Vicki Bergkamp: [07:30](#) And then the, and then our documents say that the community will take care of my needs. So, you know, the, the, the, the struggle with poverty is that I don't always get what I want when I wanted and, and our, our documents, they were all going to be treated the same. So it makes no difference how much money you make, whether you make \$10 a week or \$500 a week, your lifestyles are gonna look the same. And you all are also given budgets, right? We're, in order to make that work as an organization, I have, we have to be able to say, I'm going to need this or I want, we talk a lot about the difference between our wants and our needs and, um, and, and it's important for us to be able to name our needs. It's also important for us to be able to say, I'd like this, but I don't really need it so that we can keep a balance, not just in the short term, but in the longterm.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [08:21](#) So we have a lot of sisters that are retired right now and it may not seem like we should worry about them, but we have, it is important for us right now to save money to make sure we do take care of everybody. I often have said that, um, the, the biggest advantage of this lifestyle and with a vow of poverty here is the timing issue. If, if my, if my, um, if I had trouble with my teeth right now, I could go to a dentist and get it taken care of. People I've worked for might have to wait until next year, you know, so it's that, that's the upside of it is like, because it's in common, the more immediate needs to get taken care of immediately and often other people have to wait for those needs to be met. Yeah. So you have been a regional leader for how many months?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [09:09](#) About seven or eight.
- Molly McKinstry: [09:12](#) Uh, and how did you come to be the regional leader?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [09:16](#) Well, are we have an election process? It started way back last spring when the first step was that we talk to each other about who might be good at this job at this time in our life. And um, I was pretty sure it wasn't going to be me. I even told people not to worry about putting my name in because it wasn't gonna work. Spoiler alert. Yeah. Anyway. Um, you know, that that process is amazing. I mean, the spirit's at work where it, we're all praying, we're all talking to each other and things change over time. And then we, when we, we had, we had a little retreat for everybody that had been named as possible people. And some of the, some people said, you know, I'm, I'm, I just can't do it right now. It's not my time. It's not good for me. So some people dropped out. And then we went to the assembly in June with the assemblies, an annual gathering of all the sisters that are able to come together. And so we came to that

assembly with this group of names. And again, we had process. We, there were questions to us, there were, there were discussions in tables, like what do we think about these people? What do we know about them? And, um, then it just starts emerging and you can start to see where it's going to go. And eventually we do an actual ballot and, and you have to have two thirds, uh, on the first two ballots, I think. And then after that, it's 50%. So it took us a couple of days to get through the five positions that are elected. Yes. Um, so, you know, it's, uh, it's, it's a wonderful process to be part of in the sense that it's amazing to watch it.

Vicki Bergkamp:

[11:00](#)

It's also a difficult process if your thoughts about yourself and what you want to do and the community's thoughts about you in what you want to do are two different. Yeah. And so some people, it's easy to get hurt in that cause these are all our friends and comrades, but somehow we always manage to work through it and work it out. And that idea of individual and community, uh, thoughts that may differ leads us to the third bow. Oh yeah, we forgot that one. Yeah, I left it out. We're back to it. Um, obedience is, um, traditionally in the, in the very far distant past, obedience was often, um, I tell you what you're gonna do and you go do it because you're, the person's obedient. Obedience today is about these, uh, being in willing to enter into these processes of how we're going to make decisions. And so whether it's internationally at our general level or locally at this regional level, or even more locally in our houses, um, it's a matter what we commit ourselves to is being part of the process of the decisions that need to be made.

Molly McKinstry:

[12:13](#)

And this was for me the word I bristled with the most obedience. And it's also the one I was the most wrong about. Um, and I've, uh, we are recording this interview a little backwards. I've already, uh, sat down with 23 other sisters. So I've heard a lot of stories. Um, and when they talk about the vows of obedience, they're talking about I wanted to go back to school. I wanted to start a new career. I wanted to take some time off to care for a, you know, an aging or sick family member. And those conversations were obedience and I'm using air quotes came into being where taking those really heavy decisions and going to your counselor or the leadership team at the time and saying, this is kind of where my head's at. What do you think? What is, how is this going to impact the community and collaboratively choosing something that's best. Right. Which I don't think we would call obedience in today's world. So I was really wrong about it.

- Vicki Bergkamp: [13:23](#) Yeah. I, you know, I think, um, I think if you think about the story you just told, um, that movement of saying, here's something I really want to do, and going to somebody and letting that person interact with you about whether it's good for the whole group. If I get to go do this, that's harder than it sounds. Yeah. I just, um, emailed one of our sisters in Lichtenstein and invited her to come over. Uh, next year is the 150th anniversary of the arrival of our community in the United States. Yeah. From Steiner Burke, Switzerland. And so I invited her to come over and join us for that as a representative. And when she responded to me, she was just thrilled to, she'd been our general counsel. She'd been here many times and she had given up on the idea that she'd ever be able to come back.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [14:20](#) But her next line was, I will have to go talk to sister Judas, who's her regional. Yeah. About whether that's possible and you know, my mind can go to what do you mean whether it's possible. Of course we could make this story, but you know, that community, she has important work there and that community has to decide whether that makes sense for her to be gone for that period of time. So, uh, I know that sounds, it sounds better than being told what to do. Yeah. But you know, when you're told what to do, then you can gripe that the person that told you to do it. Yeah. When you decide together. Yes. Right. And you have to, you have to maintain a different level of openness. And when you say, I really would like to do this, and they look at you and say, you know, that isn't going to work right now. That finding the grace to accept that gracefully and be able to live in a positive way and not get your feelings hurt that, that, that uh, it's not a momentary process. It's a long process, but it's a very healthy one.
- Molly McKinstry: [15:21](#) Yeah, I agree with that. I think people in any sort of relationship could probably learn from the exact, you know, regardless of what vows that you've taken, that that's probably a process we could benefit
- Vicki Bergkamp: [15:33](#) well and from, and all of us do that in our relationships, uh, married people have to do that. Yes. Parents and children have to do that. It's not a new process. It's just that parents who you can look at that I concept of obedience with parents and children and we know that children will obey in certain ways at certain times. You have to know each other.
- Molly McKinstry: [15:54](#) Yeah. Uh, knowing each other is, uh, something you all do very well. You have known the women in this community for as long as you've been a sister? Um, the question I probably get asked

most is how do, how does a woman live with only other women and not kill each other?

Vicki Bergkamp:

[16:17](#)

You learn over time that it, you know, again, if the thick of it, the same thing. How does a family you have together without killing each other. Um, you, you learn to balance each other's needs and you learn what, which part of your needs are most important and what you're willing to, you know, what are the wars in, what are the battles? And there are plenty of battles. Um, and people have lots of stories about the battles. Um, and, but they're part of your growth and part of learning who you are and who the other person is. And I think another important part of this is, um, in many ways in community what you are agreeing to do by choosing to live in community, which is choice we make by joining the community. The congregation is that we commit to each other to create a safe place for each other. And there are times when you know you're not at your best and sometimes those times go on for a long period of time and you needed a safe place. And so that's what you create for each other. And sometimes you are living with someone who's in that bad place and you have to decide, is that person really that bad or is that person just needs some space and we can support them through this, create that space for them. Yeah.

Molly McKinstry:

[17:31](#)

Um, and I think part of the misconception that comes with his ideas, like all these women are living together. Um, you all don't actually live in like a bunk bed style doorms together. This is not the sound of music. No. Yeah. Uh, can you explain what living in community looks like in a modern world? Uh, in, in the modern world,

Vicki Bergkamp:

[17:50](#)

uh, we really do try to, um, evaluate the amount of space it's comfortable for people to live well together. So everybody has a private bedroom. Uh, we, we try to find facilities if we're in a new spot and we needed that, has some, um, is built in such a way that they're, you know, there might be a Dan here in a living room over here. So some people go watch TV and other people being listened to music so that, you know, I would say we try to avoid spaces where the kitchen, living room, dining room thing, it's all one big room. So you need, you find, so you find those ways of creating space for each other. Um, you all live in just kind of normal houses, right? Like having roommates. Right, right. We do live in, but more now than we ever have, we live, uh, because um, traditionally we often were connected to like hospitals or schools that may have a quote convinced they're right living right.

- Vicki Bergkamp: [18:47](#) But now they, those, those don't exist for the most part. And so we live in, we do rent or buy regular houses.
- Molly McKinstry: [18:54](#) You have a unique living situation though, which is unique to your position. You live alone.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [18:59](#) I chose to live alone at least this year, the first year or so. Um, for a couple reasons. One is I'm, I'm a very strong introvert and so this job is an extrovert job. So I knew that the, um, living alone part would give me the time I needed to catch my breath and be ready for the next day. Um, I'm from the Wichita area, we're living in Saint Louis. So many of the communities that are here are very well established. And again, it was not choosing not to put my energy into creating community until I figured out what this job is really about. And the third reason was most of the sisters in St Louis lived to the south and east and I chose to go to the west so that when I have a chance to get back to Wichita, I don't have to drive through St Louis to do though.
- Molly McKinstry: [19:50](#) Smart. Yes. You also have a job where I'm being the leader. I call you a lot of different leadership terms in my head are probably now actually, um, you know, these women at a deeply personal level because all decisions, big life changing decisions come through the leadership teams and they come through you. Um, I can imagine that would make living with someone, especially if you were making a decision in their life, kind of difficult.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [20:24](#) Yeah, it is. I think people, uh, over the years have done that and I've had to do that and um, you know, but it's one of those life things. It's like a lot of people have to do that in their families too, you know, so it's like, it's not that different than what families have to. Yeah. Yeah.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [20:44](#) And I think you're, you're touching on, uh, one of the hugest is hugest a word? Hmm, no. I was so obsessed I think is the proper word for starting this podcast because, um, when I started working here, I had all these ideas about how different sisters were going to be that you all were just these very quiet, contemplated, like spend all your time in prayer, um, and can't just not year loud and rambunctious and stubborn and funny and you've got this huge number of experiences. You're just humans with the job that we don't fully as a society understand. Um, and I loved learning about it. But what's cool is that the more you learn about it, the more you realize, oh, it's just like any other job you take. We just have this kind of, yes,
- Vicki Bergkamp: [21:39](#) there's a weird, mysterious, yeah, there's something mysterious and almost kind of a romantic mystery about religious life that



people like the most. I, uh, if I can tell a story many years ago, um, when sis, when Mother Teresa died, um, I went to the day or two afterwards, I went to a dinner and everyone was talking about Mother Teresa and how much impact she had on the world and how wonderful it was. And what's going to happen then now that she's died, etc. And I was sitting in there and being very quiet. I had just come from doing, um, um, consultation with the religious community who was struggling to maintain all their ministries and, and the number, et cetera. So someone asked me why I wasn't saying anything. Did I not believe that mother Theresa made a huge impact on the world? And I said, oh, yes, of course I do.

Vicki Bergkamp:

[22:32](#)

I said, I'm trying to sort through the idea that part of her mystique was that she served the poorest of the poor and that she wore the dress of India, which was the, sorry, I said, I just come from this place. And a sister runs a homeless shelter, uh, in this little city. It's a broken down hotel. And she runs this place for the homeless. And she was wearing jeans and a sweatshirt and tennis shoes. So she was wearing the dress of the people. She was surfing and she was serving people. No one else in that area would serve. And I said, so these two women had a lot in common. And yet most people would follow Mother Teresa but would not follow the sister who was running the homeless shelter. And I said, I struggle with that as soon as I can remember of a religious community that there are some things people really like and some things people don't even notice. Yeah, yeah.

Molly McKinstry:

[23:35](#)

You touched on just perfect segues. The first being the namesake of this podcast habits, which, um, I really enjoy a good pun. Um, which is part of why it's called habits but for a lot of people who don't know anything about religious, like the traditional vestment you see in nun wearing, especially in movies is called a habit. Right? but y'all don't wear them.

Vicki Bergkamp:

[24:03](#)

No, we don't. Um, I have historically, um, read the Mathias really was not inclined to dress differently than the people she served rep and her writings talk about that as, as we, as her organize her group of women became connected to the church. The church was very adamant at that time in the 18 hundreds that the sisters had to dress in a habit, in other words, up here differently than, than then. But Maria and really fought that and, uh, she wanted us to dress like the people we served. Um, so, you know, I know that's controversial and I, I don't know that there's a right answer to that, but for our community there's a right answer because she was very clear about that.

Yeah. I had a personal experience. Uh, I was teaching. So after Vatican II, as we went back to our own documents

Vicki Bergkamp: [24:58](#)

and let's, for the non-Catholics, what is Vatican II?

Vicki Bergkamp: [25:03](#)

Vatican two was a meeting of the bishops of the world in the, uh, early 1960s. And they wrote a number of documents and one of the themes was religious life and we were called in religious life to go back to the documents of our founders to re-ignite those charisms because I suppose at that time there was a tendency to lump us all together. Sisters were sisters that didn't make any difference. Where's the communities are very different. They all have a different heartbeat. Yeah. So after that we were doing all this work and I had reached a point, I was, I'm still wearing the veil and I was teaching seventh and eighth grade at a school and I had this little gaggle of girls that used to hang around with me after in recess and after school, etc. So I had reached a point where I was taking my veil off on weekends and you know, I was always a word to school in church, but I wasn't wearing it anyplace else.

Vicki Bergkamp: [25:59](#)

So over Christmas I thought it's time to just drop it. So I went to school after Christmas and I was prepared for all the questions these girls were going to ask. And they didn't say anything to me all day about it. I thought, okay, I don't know what that means. So afterschool, when, when I left the classroom, I walked out to go home and there they were all standing outside waiting for me. And I thought, okay, here it comes. And I said, what's up? And they said, well, you need to to um, settle this dispute. We had been hammered all days. We all that we do not know whether you cut your hair, got new glasses or forget what their other options. Plus they had no idea that I didn't have available. So that taught me that the, the habit, that symbol is more for people that do not know you.

Vicki Bergkamp: [26:51](#)

The people that know, you know, you're a religious and they, they know what you're about. And we can, we use the symbol of our heart and cross on our chain that that's the symbol of our community. The other story I have about that is, um, I was working in Washington DC and I went home at lunch one day and the place I lived was over, had a little bridge to it and there was a man standing right in front of it and I didn't, I thought, well, I'll go get the mail rather than, I wasn't sure. I didn't know it wasn't from that, from our neighborhood. And um, so I went and got mail. He continued to kind of stand there and I think at some point he realized that I probably was a little trying to figure out. So he started to walk towards me and he said, you're a sister, the precious blood, aren't you? Yeah. And I, I looked at

him like, how could he possibly know that? Well, he had noticed from a distance my heart and change

Molly McKinstry: [27:44](#)

and the heart and chain, it's a necklace that all the ASCs wear that has a heart and cross at the bottom.

Vicki Bergkamp: [27:49](#)

Yeah. He had noticed that and he had lived in a, um, a children's home that the sisters ran up in Pennsylvania and he talked about how important that was, how much care they had given him, and what a good start and they had given him in life. So you just never know. Yeah. The impact, the impact and how it touches people and how they're going to remember it, et Cetera.

Molly McKinstry: [28:12](#)

Yeah. Uh, so you just said the precious blood, which is an odd phrase. Uh, can you explain what that means?

Vicki Bergkamp: [28:21](#)

Uh, we were, uh, we were originally called the adorers of the precious blood. Now we're talk about the adorers of the blood of Christ, the, um, and there are a number of communities that have this precious blood charism or symbolism. And really it comes from, it comes from the idea of our life force. That blood is the life force. And even though you know, it has all the gory connotations and like, Ooh, I don't want to look at this. Um, the power of that, that image of the blood and what gives us life is a very powerful charism.

Molly McKinstry: [28:56](#)

Yeah. You just touched on a, the biggest reaction I ever get when I tell people where I work, I usually say I work for an order of nuns and if I have someone with me who knows your name, they go, oh, tell the name, tell me the name. Cause they really want just to watch the reaction. Um, but it is, it's a very, it's this idea that we are all connected through, you know, the same blood essentially. It's kind of a turnoff. The phrasing it, we all bleed the same. Yes. Um, so that's again, back to our dear neighbor. Yeah, but you, you mentioned something, I don't know, a couple months ago, uh, about ministries. You were consulting with an order about ministries. We as the doors have sponsored ministries that are, oh, so just one of my favorite things to talk about. Can you talk about what our sponsored ministries are? Of course, sponsors

Vicki Bergkamp: [29:50](#)

sponsored ministries. We have a college in a university in Wichita, Kansas. We have three care homes for the elderly in moving Kansas Davidson. He didn't Breskit and at Columbia, Pennsylvania we have um, a homeless prevention program called center of hope that somebody at your job and it's in Wichita. We have an organization in Wichita, uh, called the

women's initiative network, which is for victims of domestic abuse. And the program is really designed to give women who have experienced that, um, skills and um, um, disciplines that bring their self confidence back because very often that situation leaves them with no self, good self image. Um, I'm probably forgetting some.

Molly McKinstry: [30:42](#) And these sponsored ministries are a huge part of a lot of the stories we'll hear a this season. Um, and I'm sure you know, a seasons onward, but specifically this upcoming season is all sisters from which job they live in. The Wichita Center. Um, so when center of hope, the university, you mentioned Newman University, um, those are all in Wichita as so we get some, there's some good stories that come out of all of those. And of course, which ties is where you came from. Exactly. Um, and you worked at Newman University for a very long time. I did. You were a professor. What'd you, teach?

Vicki Bergkamp: [31:24](#) I was a professor of business administration. So I taught courses like business ethics and finance and management to an organizational behavior, et cetera.

Molly McKinstry: [31:35](#) You mean you to, you know, you like have jobs, you guys don't just sit home and pray?.

Vicki Bergkamp: [31:39](#) No, no, no. There, there, there are two general types of religious communities, what are called contemplative. And their role is to be in prayer, most of which, by the way, these are most commonly portrayed in horror films. Yes. And monasteries. Yes, you're right. Don't get out enough. That's the problem. Um, but uh, our community is considered apostolic. Okay. So the idea, the idea of an apostolic community, again, this is how you organize yourself. So you, you organize yourself so that people are free to work in various ministries and serve people.

Molly McKinstry: [32:17](#) Yes. And apostolic. Actually the word episodic comes from the root apostle, which were Jesus's followers. Those who went into the community taught his way and did his works. So it is, it is truly following the footsteps of the apostles, right? Which is our episodic comes from.

Vicki Bergkamp: [32:35](#) Exactly. Very good.

Molly McKinstry: [32:36](#) Oh, thank you. You kind a Catholic gold star today. Um hmm. Do you want to do a little Q and a?

- Vicki Bergkamp: [32:42](#) Oh, of course. Why not?
- Molly McKinstry: [32:44](#) So I went on Instagram and first of all, if you don't follow us on social media in the show notes, you can follow us on Instagram and Facebook. We put up youtube videos and you can subscribe to habits, lots of things you can do in the show notes. And I had, uh, some lay people, which is sister speak for not a nun, um, or a priest if you're a male. Uh, and I had them submit questions that they wanted to know about none life. Don't worry. They're all, they're very, they're very chill questions. All questions. I had also want to start, okay. The first question, did do women actually dream of being a non growing up?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [33:26](#) Well, I don't know whether you're, you dream about it. I suppose you imagine it, maybe that's the same thing as dreaming. I don't think so. I mean, dreaming is something I would say it comes from your subconscious.
- Molly McKinstry: [33:37](#) I think, uh, the woman who asked the question, I think she's saying like, you know, when you're little and you're like, oh, what do you want to be around? Very princess. Uh, well, you know,
- Vicki Bergkamp: [33:47](#) back a ways with like when the sound of music was out in the 60s, you know, I'm sure little girls dressed up with bails on their heads because it was an easy thing to do.
- Molly McKinstry: [33:57](#) Um, and actually this question gets answered in a couple of episodes. Um, a lot of the interviews speak to how sisters, you know, found their way to the community. And for some of them it was very young. They knew that they were going to be sisters. None of them have talked about dreaming about it though. All of them have talked about instinctual. They just knew. Yeah. And that I find more common than like, yeah, I think so, so to speak. Yeah. Um, so this question is going to, it's a personal question because I don't think you can speak for everyone. Um, but I'm sure you all get this question a lot. I know you do, cause we talked about at lunch yesterday, uh, why did you become a nun and then do you have any regrets?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [34:43](#) Hmm. Um, I, I have always said that it is hard for me to describe why became a nun as it would be for someone to describe why they married a certain person. It's, um, there's enough mystery to it. I mean, you can, you can make all the pros and cons you want, but eventually it just comes down to, yeah, you just choose it. Um, I have often said my vocation was born on a tractor I knew, grew up on a small farm and there was a lot of field work to do during the summer. And so I had, and I liked

being outside and so I, I love to go out in the field and so I had a lot of hours and hours and hours on my, on to myself out on the tractor in the middle of that exists the summer. Yeah. So you just kind of watch nature and watch which trying to watch what you are doing and think about your life. And so I've often said I think that having that time probably embedded the idea in me more than it would have, um, if I hadn't had that time.

- Molly McKinstry: [35:44](#) Yeah. We talked for a second about it, but what is the process to become specifically an ASC?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [35:50](#) So I was, um, I was taught by one group of sisters in Grade School and in high school I was, went to a girl's high school that was, had two sisters, groups of sisters there. So when I decided I was serious about this, then you contact the quote, the vocation director,
- Molly McKinstry: [36:09](#) uh, which we will link our vocations in the show notes if anyone's interested.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [36:14](#) Yes. And um, you make the contact and say, I'm interested. They do some, some discussion. Um, there's some testing, like a psychological testing, right, like personality tests it's going to work for. Yeah, exactly. And um, and then you just make the arrangements and show up.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [36:33](#) Yes. Um, and then you go through a year of, we have the first year, I forget what it's called. Oh, candidates. Yeah. They call them candidates now we call them postulants when I was young. And uh, it's, it's really a year where you live with the community and just try to get us a real sense of yeah, I could do this or no, this is not for me. And then you go into a year of Novitiate, which is the most formal year of training and it's very intense. And during that year you really don't do much of anything else. And when I went through an initiative, you were pretty well cut off from everybody for the most part. Um, and then that after that year you make first vows and you make those for very short periods of time. And there's a period of called temporary profession where you're in short term valves until you decide, yes, this is it. I'm going to make a final commitment. Um, so it takes awhile, five years, uh, candidacy are still living in, I call it the real world. Like you haven't really fully changed your life when you're a novice. You live at the Novitiate, which for us as in Bellville, Illinois, um, you live at the Novitiate, you spend your time almost exclusively around sisters. You're doing a lot of discerning, which is sister speak for thinking, praying, deciding, learning. You learn about the

community, you learn about what this looks like in your daily life. Um,

- Molly McKinstry: [37:57](#) and then you take temporary vows and then when your temporary professed you, you go, you work or go to school or whenever your next step is. So I affectionately call them baby nuns. But we do have some, um, candidates novices. And temporary professed and I'm looking at a picture of them and I'm just going to give some examples of what they're doing. Uh, one of them is living at the novitiates and uh, learning English and studying. She's from Bolivia. One of them is in the Olivia, but she is American in Guatemala and Guatemala. And then one of them is at the individual living in Bellville. But then we also have, uh, candidates novice is and temporary professed across the globe. Um, and some of our temporary professed, um, one of them's in college becoming a nurse. One of them was in college doing music. Their therapy. Yeah. So your life does not end becoming a sister. It begin. That's true. Very profound. The next question, do women ever leave the community?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [39:02](#) Yes. Uh, I, I started with a group of 13 people and I'm the only one left. Yeah. So I knew 12 that very well. I know, I know one number of others that have left and some of it set, most of it is just when there's, they reach a point where they realize that their, their life and the or the community is, is not working. And it, yeah. It just doesn't make sense to stay together.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [39:26](#) Yeah. Um, but they don't get shunned. It's not like a, there's no hatred involved. Like it's just a collaborative process the same way everything is right. We, we stay in touch with them where I'm still friends with a number of them. Yeah. Um, and then the other part of that is can you come back?
- Vicki Bergkamp: [39:43](#) I have known people that, that have done that. I've known several people that have done that. I know people that have come back after a very short period of done. I know a woman who came back after 20 years. Yeah. Um, it was, it was interesting story because she left the community and she was an associate. This is not, our community was another community. And uh, she was an associate and the associate and she retired from her fulltime ministry. She was in her sixties, and the community finally said to her, you, you spend more time with us than you do by yourself. Why don't you just come back to the community? And she did.
- Molly McKinstry: [40:13](#) Yeah. Um, and we, I have not interviewed, um, the has, so I don't want to use her name, but there is a sister in our community who was in the formation process, left or had a

different life path and then came back after a pretty good chunk of time. So yes, you can. Yeah. What would you say to people who are listening to this thinking, like they have their own kind of ideas of what none life. And I'm using quotations again, I frequently, when I'm not officially communicating for the outdoors, I call it not airy. Um, and when they have their own own ideas of nunnery, what, I mean, what would you say to them about what it's like to be a sister? You know, look, I think, um, they would,

- Vicki Bergkamp: [41:06](#) they might find it really hard to find much difference between their life and our life. Um, if there's anything, it's that, um, okay, the times that I might choose to eat my meals are not my choices. It's the choice of the community. So, um, you know, somebody with a big family would have the same issue. Yeah. But you know, if I were, if I were, I'll use myself. If I were a single person at this point in my life when I ate would probably be different than when I do now because this is, this is the style. Um, there would be gatherings that I would go to, um, that, that as a lay person I would say, well, I don't think I'm in the mood to do that this weekend. So, but it has the same dynamic as, as family always the same dynamic is family. I wouldn't blow off my family reunion. I wouldn't blow off a community gathering. Okay.
- Molly McKinstry: [42:03](#) I think it is. So just incredibly normal.
- Vicki Bergkamp: [42:09](#) It is normal. And I would say that the, the, the founding piece of it for us as individuals as faithfulness, yeah. We're being faithful to our community. Men and women around the world are being faithful to their relationships into their families. Yeah. It's the same dynamic. Yeah, you don't,
- Molly McKinstry: [42:29](#) it's just that like is living every day like, exactly. And I think, you know, it's also funny to see is like I say this to y'all a lot, but there's a very women here, there's a lot of different from a lot of different backgrounds. They do a lot of different things and there's one thing you all have income and in is your incredible stubbornness. It's just normal. Like it's just a normal office. People, you know, think I work in a monastery in the dark. Um, it's just a normal office. It's normal life and it's an education every day for me. So I'm excited that we get to educate some people
- Vicki Bergkamp: [43:05](#) well and , you're educating us to.



Molly McKinstry: [43:08](#) Um so there's one question we ask everyone that comes on the podcast. Obviously the podcast is called habits. What is your best habit?

Vicki Bergkamp: [43:22](#) My best habit is probably reading. I love to read. I like to read a lot of different kinds of things.

Molly McKinstry: [43:29](#) What are you reading right now?

Vicki Bergkamp: [43:32](#) I'm reading about a group of women who were friends, a novel, a group for people who were friends in college. And I've come back to the lake house for their summer vacation. I'm reading about vulnerability by Brene Brown.

Molly McKinstry: [43:49](#) We're going to link our, because I think, yeah, she's very good. Um,

Vicki Bergkamp: [43:58](#) can't even think of what else I have. I'm getting ready to go on retreat next week. And so I have this stack that's forming and yeah, I keep pulling things off the shelf. They can, oh, I've been wondering this now. I'll probably get to retreat and just stack them up and look at him longingly. But, um, it just have a lot of different kinds of things I like to read.

Molly McKinstry: [44:20](#) And what is your worst habit?

Vicki Bergkamp: [44:22](#) Diet coke? It's my, the only way I get caffeine. So I have some in the morning. Uh, I've said, I think I liked the spritz in the water as much as the caffeine, so, you know, it's the sort of thing, but yeah. Yes, I am definitely. Yeah. Yeah. Diet coke free. I'm a recovery. Yes. Yes. You understand. Yeah.

Molly McKinstry: [44:43](#) Um, so we didn't talk a lot about your life. Uh, have no fear. We're bringing you back. Um, but thank you so much for kicking off the podcast. Thank you so much for answering the question. So I'm sure you get all the time. Um, and I'm excited for this season and for you to get to hear all the stories and for everyone else get to hear them as well. So thanks for coming on.

Vicki Bergkamp: [45:03](#) Well we, we really appreciate people asking us questions because you do, we don't know what people are interested in and it's hard for us to just say, well, I'm sure they want to know this. So the questions are wonderful.

Vicki Bergkamp: [45:16](#) Yeah. Awesome. Thank you. Yeah. Thanks so much. Thanks for joining us for show notes and behind the scenes. Check out our

website@doors.org habits is brought to you by the Adorers of the blood of Christ US region. Coproduced by Cheryl Wittenauer, Laurie Bengel and Molly McKinstry edited by Molly McKinstry. Thanks. We'll see you all next week.