

# Carmelites open arms to discerning women

Since 2002 the Carmelite Sisters of Baltimore have been inviting young women to a Come and See Weekend at their monastery. During this time women get a taste of what it is like to be a Carmelite and a true understanding of the community.

“We are trying to foster contemplative prayer for everyone in the world,” said Sister Colette Ackerman, O.C.D. “It’s important to give them the opportunity to experience religious life firsthand.”

During this weekend the women, normally a group of about five, learn the history, spirituality and prayer life of the sisters. They experience living in a monastery, doing daily chores and preparing for sacraments. Sister Leah Hargis, O.C.D., said one year when the Come and See Weekend fell before Ash Wednesday she and one of the participants prepared the ashes for the service, which was something the young woman had never done before.

“I think the women have been surprised at how unlike a retreat it is with the work and studying that goes on during this time,” Sister Judith Murray, O.C.D., said. “If women are still in the old mindset they need to experience the religious life that is vibrant.”

The sisters agree that the weekend helps women in their discernment and proves that the community is vital and living.

“When the women share our life they get a chance to see us in action, and there is nothing contrived about it,” said Sister Leah. “They know there is a community of women that is here to support them.”

Sister Colette said that women need to understand this decision is not something that can be made overnight or even in one weekend. It is important for the women to stay connected with the community even if the Lord leads them on a different path. “This weekend provides them with an opportunity to ask questions in a safe environment,” said Sister Leah. “You have opened the door for them.”

For more information, visit [www.baltimorecarmel.org](http://www.baltimorecarmel.org).