News
Religious Life



Benedictine Sisters Susan and Jill Reuber, pictured in an undated photo in Indianapolis, have often shared the same path in life, but their roads to their religious vocations took different turns. The y were born within two minutes of each other as part of triplets with their brother Eric. (CNS/The Criterion/John Shaughnessy)

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Benedictine Sisters Jill and Susan Reuber have often shared the same path in life, but their roads to their religious vocations took different turns.

They were born within two minutes of each other, part of triplets with their brother Eric.

Growing up, the sisters shared a bedroom and a car, became best friends and did many of the same activities – from playing in their high school marching band to working together at Dairy Queen.

One of the few places where they were separated growing up was during Mass at their parish church.

"Our parents didn't let us sit next to each other," Sister Jill told The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

"Probably because they thought we would talk to each other," Sister Susan said.

"Or hit each other," Sister Jill added, smiling.

Yet despite this remarkable closeness, Susan had a quick, emphatic reaction years later when older sister Jill chose to make her vows as a Sister of St. Benedict.

"I wasn't going to do what Jill did," she said forcefully.

That response makes both sisters smile at the same time.

So begins the story of how these two 39-year-old sisters are not only connected by blood and love, but now also by their faith and shared vows as Benedictine sisters.

Sister Jill's journey to religious life took its defining turn when she was a student at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana.

As a freshman and sophomore, she spent her spring breaks on mission trips to Nazareth Farm, a Catholic community in rural West Virginia.

She was studying elementary education, and as a freshman wanted "to teach in the Appalachian Mountains," she said.

"In my second year there, we prayed together in the mornings and the evenings. That's where I found I wanted that prayer life, that community life," Sister Jill said. "That's when I started discerning that (religious life) is what I wanted to do. I also wanted God to give me a lightning bolt, to tell me what to do."

There was just one problem with that lightning bolt plan.

"During one Mass at camp, the priest's whole homily was that God doesn't give lightning bolts," Sister Jill said.

By her senior year, she started visiting the Benedictine sisters' community at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, in the Evansville Diocese.

"I fell in love with prayer, community and the way the sisters loved each other."

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Following her college graduation, she entered the Benedictine community in Ferdinand in August 2003 and professed her final vows in 2011. She is now the community's vocation director, seeking to lead other women to the life she loves.

It's the life she wanted, but one Susan "wanted nothing to do with it."

"When Jill was discerning in college, she was right that I didn't want anything to do with it," said Sister Susan, a 2003 graduate of Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana. "I wanted my own car, my own house and my own paycheck. But deep down, I didn't want to do what Jill was doing. In college, for the first time, we really had our own identity."

After graduation, she began a career in education, joining Roncalli High School in Indianapolis as an English teacher in her second year.

"It was my dream job – teaching in a Catholic school, sharing my faith with my students," she said. "Fast forward eight years to 2011. I'm starting to think

something is missing in my life. I'm at school way too much."

Right then, she gets a message from Benedictine Sister Michelle Sinkhorn – vocation director for the Ferdinand community at the time – inviting her to a "Come and See" weekend among the sisters.

"I didn't know if I wanted to open that door," Sister Susan recalled. "I talked to Jill, and she convinced me to come, that we could hang out for the weekend. In my mind, I was just going to see Jill."

Then a series of lightning bolts hit, starting on that weekend.

"God opened my heart and said, 'Why aren't you pursuing this?'" Sister Susan recalled. "I saw how happy Jill is, and how happy the sisters are. At the end of the weekend, I sat down with Sinkhorn. I owned a house in Beech Grove, and Sister said, 'Why don't you visit the sisters at Our Lady of Grace Monastery there?'"

"The drive home was the longest two and a half hour drive I had ever made in my life. I'm going to have to quit my job and sell my house," she continued. "Then at Roncalli, (Benedictine) Sister Anne Frederick handed me a brochure for their 'Come and See' weekend at Our Lady of Grace. She didn't even know I had gone to Ferdinand. I saw that as a sign from the Holy Spirit that I should come here."

She went to Our Lady of Grace for the weekend, thinking "I have to find something I hate about the place so I could be done with it."

She had a different feeling by the end of the weekend. When it was time leave, Sister Susan said, "I didn't find anything I didn't like. I fell in love with the sisters. What I was missing in my life was community."

She entered the Benedictine community at Beech Grove in September 2012 and professed her final vows this past June. She also has returned to Roncalli as a teacher.

Sharing the same vows has added another dimension to the siblings' closeness. Living their vows also has brought them to a deeper relationship with God.