

God's Career Women

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The 28-minute film *God's Career Women* is the story of a vocation to the religious life. It pictures the experience of one girl's realization of her call to serve God while she attends a vocation day service in her parish church. The girl is followed through family discussion and entrance into a religious community.

On September 28-29, 1951, Sancta Maria in Ripa (SSND motherhouse in St. Louis) became the setting for scenes relating to the entrance, reception, and profession as a School Sister of Notre Dame. Additional scenes included a class in asceticism in the candidature, candidates in the dormitory on fifth floor, a wiener roast, square dancing, novices praying at the grotto and listening to a reader in the refectory, a novice sewing vestments, and one preparing for the Eucharist. Prayer, play, and study helped provide a balanced lifestyle for new members of the community.

SSND candidates, novices, and professed sisters, directed by S. Jeannine Vermeersch from Rosati-Kain, appeared in various scenes. Professional actors played the young girl and her parents. Bishop John P. Cody presided at the reception and profession ceremonies. Members of The Serra Club formed the congregation in the recently renovated motherhouse chapel.

The film was not devoted solely to the story of one religious community. Various congregations and their ministries were depicted: in the classroom, the operating room, the nursing home, in prayer. In addition to Ripa, scenes were taken at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, St. Mary's Hospital, Mount Grace Convent, Cenacle Retreat House, Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged. The film was financed by The Serra Club of St. Louis and produced by Hardcastle Films Inc. of St. Louis. The script was written by Mildred Planthold, the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* women's news editor. Narrator was Frank Eschen, president of The Serra Club and director of special news events for KSD-TV.

The color film premiered in September 1952 and was shown in every Catholic diocese in the United States.

Parents' groups, organizations, and students from primary to college level saw the film. On October 6, 1952, Mr. and Mrs. Eschen, Miss Mildred Planthold, and a number of Serra Club members active in its production enjoyed a dinner at Ripa. Following dinner, they attended rosary devotions and benediction with the motherhouse community. The community then assembled in the auditorium to watch the film.

Congratulating The Serra Club and Miss Planthold, Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter described the film as "a real work of art - a splendid contribution not only to the archdiocese but to the country as a whole."

[Sources: Ripa Chronicle, 1951, 1952; Interprovincial Newsletter, December 1951; St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, September 19, 1952; flyer for description and distribution of film.]

Serra International is a world wide organization of Catholic lay men and women dedicated to fostering and affirming vocations to the priesthood and vowed religious life. Serra's USA Council is based in Chicago. *For more information, visit www.serraus.org (Used with permission.)*

