



## *The extraordinary gifts God gives us in our vocations and gardens!*

Religious Communities nationwide were invited to submit a reflection on “what gardening and gardens mean to them” and “how gardens enhance vocations” for *Visions Vocation Guide*.

We hope you will enjoy the following reflection by Mary Bryan, SHCJ, on her experiences with gardening and how gardens, like vocations, encourage life, nurture the soul, and remind us of God’s beauty.

**“One is nearer to God’s heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth.”**



*“I happened upon this quotation on a plaque in a garden at Cape May Point, New Jersey. I identified with the words immediately. Only God could have thought of gardens and flowers with their colors, fragrances, and textures!*

*Of course, the vegetable garden is of great importance, especially with today’s concern for feeding the poor. But living in an area where deer, rabbits, groundhogs, and squirrels run freely, we must satisfy ourselves with a few grape tomato plants and some herbs. The rest of the garden is flowers.*

*That flower garden, especially in spring and summer, brings us great joy. I particularly love the zinnia flowers. This plant is fun to watch grow from seed and quite undemanding, as it requires little moisture. Zinnias come in the brightest of colors and have long sturdy stems, making cutting and decorating sheer joy. Our community uses them, along with other garden flowers, to enhance the tabernacle altar in the Chapel, and I know that strengthens our prayer and devotion.*

*How does the Holy Child Sisters’ garden enhance vocations? I think by encouraging life. Like a garden, vocations have deep roots and an abundance of growth. Vocations support our desire to grow spiritually and become the people we are meant to be – as God made us. Vocations are surrounded by nourishing and nurturing environments that praise God by just being. Like gardens, vocations invite God to be closer to us and tend to the contemplative aspects of life that help inform our actions.*

*What extraordinary gifts God gives us in our vocations and gardens!”*

