



Discerning God's Call to the OMS: An Explorer's Guide

Each of us is on a very particular journey with God, yet there is a common thread that binds together those drawn to a monastic way of life: a desire for a deeper friendship with God, lived out in community with others. Many who come to the Order of the Mustard Seed (OMS) are longing for rhythms, companions, and a shared Rule of Life that help them be true to Christ, kind to people, and take the gospel to the nations in the midst of everyday life.

Sometimes this longing springs from a desire and hunger for more and a restlessness within our spiritual journey. OMS sees this restlessness as an invitation from the Father into deeper intimacy with Him and into a life shaped by prayer, mission, and justice. As you explore the Order of the Mustard Seed—its story, its vows, and its practices—and consider whether to move into the Season of Preparation, you are invited to “count the cost” with Jesus and listen carefully for His call.

During the Season of Exploration, and then again in the Season of Preparation, the same two discernment questions remain at the heart of the journey:

- Is this Vow and this community for me?
- Is it for now?

As an Explorer, you are asking the Lord whether He is inviting you to take the next step: to enter a more intentional, year-long Season of Preparation with others, guided by OMS leaders. This guide is meant to serve you between your Welcome Webinar and your Discernment Call, as you begin to name your motivations, surface your expectations, and consider the time and space this journey will require. Our hope and confidence is that God will meet you as you listen, and will clarify His intention for you regarding the Order of the Mustard Seed.

I. Time, Space, and Schedule

The OMS is a dispersed, lay-led, ecumenical community, but the rhythm it invites you into is monastic in heart: it touches every day, not just Sundays or conferences. A dispersed community still involves real commitment to being present.

- **Daily Rhythms:** A Rule of Life means intentionally setting aside time for prayer, scripture, silence, and listening to God, often at set points in the day. For many Explorers, this may require sacrificing some recreational screen time, late nights, or spontaneous plans in order to safeguard space for God.
- **Shared Practices:** OMS members seek to live out their vows through practices of prayer, creativity, hospitality, mercy and justice, mission, and learning. As you discern, consider whether you are ready to grow into habits that will gently, but consistently, shape how you spend your time and energy.
- **Communal Gatherings:** You can expect regular online cohort meetings, occasional online gatherings, and, where possible, in-person retreats or vow ceremonies. Travel costs and time to attend regional or annual gatherings may need to be factored into your calendar and budget.

II. Relationships and Social Boundaries

Because OMS is a dispersed order, you remain rooted in your local context even as you join a global community; this can create both joy and friction.

- **Social Adjustments:** As your rhythms shift—fasts, rhythms of prayer, periods of silence, or saying “no” to certain forms of entertainment—you may find that friends, family, or colleagues do not fully understand your choices. This can sometimes feel isolating, but it can also open gentle conversations about your faith and calling.
- **Shared Discernment:** OMS emphasizes that “none of us lives for themselves,” and members often walk with a Cymbrogi (spiritual friend) and a spiritual director as they make significant decisions. Moving toward the OMS Vow means being willing to surrender a degree of individual autonomy and to invite others into your discernment process. This requires a profound shift in how you make major life decisions.

III. The Costs of Formation

Joining the Order is not simply signing up for a small group; it is entering a way of life. The two-step journey—Season of Exploration followed by Season of Preparation—is designed to give you generous time and support as you listen to God.

- **Season of Preparation:** If you move forward, you will join a structured, cohort-based process led by an OMS leader, lasting roughly from

December to September. This involves about two hours per month in cohort calls, personal reading, reflection exercises, and growing in relationship with your cohort and mentor. There is a financial contribution for this facilitated year, with a means-based range and bursaries available so that cost does not become a barrier.

- **Death to Self and New Life:** Formation always involves some surrender. Discipleship in this order means slowly laying down selfish habits, the need to control, and the drive to build a life on your own terms, and instead learning to seek first God's kingdom and the good of others. This can be costly, but it also opens space for deep joy, freedom, and a clearer sense of vocation.

IV. Language and Images That Shape the Journey

The Order of the Mustard Seed draws on several "wells" of Christian spirituality, including Zinzendorf's original OMS, Celtic Christianity, traditional monasticism, and the 24-7 Prayer movement. These streams give rise to a language that may become part of your own discernment and daily life.

Aposto-Monasticism - 24-7 Prayer uses this word to describe the importance of a Christian life that has healthy rhythms of "breathing in" and "breathing out".

Breathing In - when we spend time with, usually in quiet, with God, getting our hearts as close to him as he already is to us; being refreshed by his presence and his voice; and recognizing the direction of travel, he'd like us to take next. This is the monastic part of aposto-monasticism.

Breathing Out - is when we respond to the call of Jesus to go with good news to the nations; to be salt and light in every situation; to be the hands and feet of Jesus to needy people; and to bring life and wholeness to the brokenness of the world. This is the apostolic part of aposto-monasticism.

Wells - The phrase "drawing from a number of Wells" describes how someone might draw water from a well, by lowering a bucket into that well to collect its water and enjoy the life it provides. We're using this metaphor to describe how we're learning parentheses drawing water and parentheses from a number of sources or wells, and how each source is contributing to the life that we enjoy in the OMS.

These are:

- Zinzendorf's original OMS
- Celtic Christianity
- Traditional Monasticism
- Our own 24-7 Prayer journey

Intentional Community - a group of people who have decided to commit to a common vision. They decide how they are going to live in pursuit of that vision and then encourage each other toward the life they want.

Lectio 365 - a free daily devotional resource that helps you pray the Bible every day.

Rule of Life - a pattern for living, shaped by a personal or communal, set of priorities and aspirations, underpinned by a promise. If creeds are *what* we believe, in Christ is *why* we believe, a rule is *how* we seek to live out that faith, day-to-day.

Spiritual Director - a trained companion who helps you explore, deepen, and navigate your relationship with God. Rather than giving direct advice, they act as a "holy listener," asking reflective questions to help you recognize how grace, purpose, and the Spirit are moving through your daily experiences.

Trellis - a strong and firm structure that's used in the garden to train or hold a plant as it grows. They often offer good places for the plant to attach themselves, and to grow around, so that the plant takes shape, rather than simply growing wildly and wandering all over the place. Our lives can also be a little wild if all structure is removed, so in our case, the structure that's provided by the OMS rule of life is designed in a way to help us grow our lives, in such a way that they flourish, and that they take the shape we actually want them to take.

These words and images are not just concepts; they are tools to help you pay attention to what God is already doing in and through you, and to discern whether joining OMS is the right next step, in this season.