

Anouska, fcJ

English



How might you hear God calling?

Do you ever feel that everyone else's life is great, but you need to sort yours out? I did. I had a university degree, job, house, cat, dog – everything that the world was telling me would make me happy, but there was something missing... God!

I felt this deep desire to find out more about my Catholic faith when I was 16/17, and I spent several weeks meeting regularly with a priest who helped me discover the beauty of the Church I had been baptised into so many years earlier. I never thought, the searching would lead to religious life – when I first started thinking about it, it all seemed so scary and so 'not-me'. I visited two orders, an apostolic and then a contemplative. In the first I felt good, the community aspect was great but the ministry was not for me. When visiting the contemplative order, the women were lovely but it was not 'my' place.

In my mind, after two weekend visits, that was religious life finished, I had thought about it, looked and not found, therefore the search was over, I would go to university, fall hopelessly in love and get married. But God had different ideas.

I have fallen in love, that is certain, but marriage is not where my call to happiness and wholeness lies.

Graduation came and went, then employment, yet still there was something missing. God was forming me to be ready to say 'Yes'. Eventually I reached the point of no-return, I surrendered to God. I had tried being in control, doing this, living that, choosing this, leaving that – but there was still this gap, and it seemed to be getting bigger and less easy to ignore.

Having spent Easter with friends, at the Easter Vigil Celebration, I felt unable to bargain with God any longer. In floods of tears marvelling at all that God had done, I heard myself say '*not my will, but your will be done*' – this surrender opened the flood-gates.

“ I could finally say to myself and others, God is the centre of my life, my life will revolve around God and the Church, as a religious, no idea where, what or how.

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In fact the where, what or how did not seem to bother me, God would look after them, the surrender was all I could offer and I offered it wholeheartedly, and felt completely at peace.

In this peace I searched the internet, I had no real idea about religious life or different orders, but God even worked across the internet and led me to this page www.fcjsisters.org.

By now I was 26 years old – God works slowly, but always effectively, and never gives up! I attended a Vocations Weekend and in that first meeting, I knew that I had found the piece that had been missing. If my life was a four piece jigsaw, I had been living with three, but I had suddenly found the fourth, and I never wanted to let it go.

To have the opportunity to meet sisters who had given their lives to God, who were alive, in love and happy, and of all ages, inspired me to do the same. I felt I could be exactly who God was calling me to be, and be whole.



Two years of accompaniment followed before postulancy, two years of growth, deepening of the desire and testing of God's call, I yearned for those meetings and each time I left, I felt I was leaving part of me behind. Yet, the waiting was all God was asking of me at that time, and it just made the time of entry initially as a postulant, then a novice even more special. I made my first vows in 2007 and my final vows on the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus in 2015. Each yes was a moment of deep joy but there was something very special about being formally welcomed into the Society in final profession and knowing I really was accepted as I am and that the FCJ Society really was 'my' place.

Over 20 years have passed since the initial thoughts of religious life at 16/17, but God has been with me in all the searching, and is with me each and every day leading me on in my living of faithful companionship of his Son, Jesus.

What attracted me to becoming an FCJ?

What attracted me in the beginning and continues to attract me now – 16 years since I met the Society first is LIFE! Young and old, I see FCJs with a spirit that is alive and in love.

As an FCJ we are women of the Church, called to stand at the foot of contemporary crosses but believing always in the hope of the resurrection. Wherever and whoever we live and work with we are called to be channels of hope, love and mercy for those around us. I currently do this through University Chaplaincy and love working with young adults, accompanying them as they study and discern who they are and what they are called to be and do.



Logo of Anouska's final vows ceremony (artwork (c) Mary Fleeson/Lindisfarne Scriptorium. Used with permission.)

What does it take to be an FCJ?

Love of and complete dependence on God and his son, Jesus – without God I am and I can do nothing. All I am is gift from him.

Openness to those who accompany you along the way.

Vision, to see the world as Christ sees it, accepting that we can't take away peoples' pain, but we can insert ourselves more consciously within it, and be their companions.

Energy! We are a small, international congregation but we work across the world, united in hearts and in minds. It takes energy and courage to live in God's service and the service of your sisters, and the world but the living is great. All God asks is an open heart, that he can use and in the words of our foundress: "God will have to lead me by the hand; he will have to do all the work himself."

And God does, I gave him my 'Yes' not knowing where it would lead, yet I can say, it is the best journey I have ever undergone and I love it! Long may it continue!



“ Por tener este Nombre, Fieles Compañeras de Jesús, daría todo, todo lo que soy... ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Fieles Compañeras de Jesús

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