

Mary Rose, fcJ

Canadian



Called to be a Faithful Companion of Jesus

In January 1960, when I told my mother I wanted to be a sister, a Faithful Companion of Jesus, she asked me what I knew about the FCJs. « Well », I said, « they wear mostly all black, they mostly all teach, and they never go home »!

This doesn't seem like very much to base a life choice on, but as I reflect back on those days, I realize that I knew considerably more than that.

I realized that becoming a sister was entering into a love relationship. From the witness of my parents particularly, I was aware that committed, faithful, love relationships depend on mutuality, openness, communication and trust.

I knew that becoming a sister was an expression of wanting to live my life *for others, unselfishly*. I knew I wanted somehow to be *useful to God* and *available* to serve God's people. My father asked me if it would be better to finish university first, to become a doctor or a teacher and then to offer that to God. That was tempting and I saw that it was a good suggestion. Still, I also had a strong desire to simply offer myself to God and let God use me how God wanted.

I knew that becoming a sister was about wanting to live for God alone. As psalm 62 puts it, « Only in God will my soul be at rest... ». I realized that life commitment as a sister included not being married and not having children. That was not an easy decision to make and at times it has not been an easy decision to live!

I knew instinctively somehow that Eucharist would be essential to my life as a Faithful Companion of Jesus. Before I even considered being a sister, I had begun to go to daily Mass, usually to 7:30am at St. Mary's Cathedral so that my friends and classmates would not see me doing anything so holy or strange! When I was a child, our family usually went to daily Mass during Lent and then came home for breakfast together before school. I suspect the adventure and the joy of those early morning family outings contributed to my growing appreciation of Eucharist.

Although at sixteen I did not have many possessions to leave behind, somehow I had a sense that having things, even things like educational and entertainment opportunities of my own choosing, was not going to make me happy. I had a pretty strong hunch that the call of Jesus to « Come, follow me » would hold more than enough richness and possibility for me.

People have asked me, « But how did you know? How did you hear God calling you? »

Well, I certainly didn't hear a voice or get a letter from God! I considered possible ways to live my life: as a single woman, in marriage, as a sister. When I tried to pray, when I tried to ask what God wanted, the idea of becoming a sister persisted. I didn't get answers, just a simple, gentle, persistent sense of « Come and see! ».

At first I said to God, « Well, life as a sister might be okay for some people, it probably is, but it's certainly not for me ». But the idea did not go away! Then I said, « Well, okay God, maybe it is for me, and if this is what you want from me, I will be a sister, but not until I finish university. » Still, the idea persisted! Finally, I said to God, « Okay, if you want me to be a sister, I'll do it, whenever you want, you show me the time! » I decided to ask to become a novice. I knew that if the Community told me I was too young and that I needed to wait, that would be a sign that God wanted me to wait as well!

I was accepted and many years later I am still grateful to God for calling me to this life, still happy to be living as a Faithful Companion of Jesus.

Today, our world is perhaps more complex. Certainly, our community would ask a young woman to have more life experience before making a decision to become a sister. Much has changed in the Church as well and in religious life in these thirty-eight years. Vatican Council II has had a big influence on all of our lives. FCJ sisters no longer wear mostly all black, they do many ministries as well as teaching, and they maintain healthy relationships with their families!

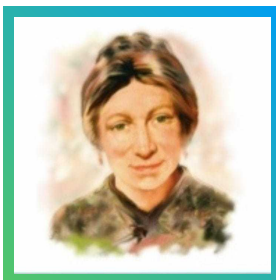
“ But the essential things remain unchanged. Religious life, FCJ life, is still a relationship of faithful, committed love. ”

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Eucharist is still at the heart of our apostolic, community lives. It is still a source of joy to me to be *useful* to God, to somehow know myself as invited to be *partner* with God, *companion* with Jesus, in God's ongoing work of creation and redemption. I still know that I want to serve God how God wants, to be useful to God's people how God wants. I still know that things do not make me happy, but being a loving, committed woman religious does!

Being a sister is not a choice I made once. It is a choice I make every day! Becoming and being a faithful companion of Jesus takes a lifetime!



“ La Société n'est pas mon œuvre, c'est l'œuvre de Dieu qui saura la soutenir si telle est sa volonté. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Fidèles Compagnes de Jésus

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