

Joanna, fcJ



How ministry leads me more deeply into the FCJ charism

‘Teach me to be a faithful companion of Jesus.’ This is a little prayer that has emerged in me over the years. With the confidence and exuberance of an 18-year-old American teenager, I entered the Society in the 1960’s. I had definite ideas about how things were ‘supposed’ to go after that. Almost immediately, the road was different from what I had expected, and it has continued to lead me to places (internal and external) that are often still mysterious to me. So, all these years later, the prayer is still appropriate: ‘Teach me. I am still learning.’

Ours is an apostolic Society. We do not have the seclusion and schedule of monastic nuns. We are inserted into the concreteness and particularity of a certain part of the world. Immersed in present-day life, we rely on the promise of our FCJ/Ignatian tradition that we can ‘find God in all things’. I have learned that the God I find is often not the one of my various false images. It is a God who is sometimes demanding, sometimes humorous, sometimes enigmatic, and frequently surprising. The journey is one of transformation – but what will be the end result cannot be predicted. How will faithful companionship with Jesus be lived in me, in the uniqueness of my life? That is not yet totally clear. ‘Trust the process’ has been helpful advice for me.

The journey took a surprising turn in October of 2013 during the FCJ General Chapter. I was one of three sisters elected as an Assistant to the new General Superior. This was a powerful experience of group discernment for me – allowing myself to remain open to the leading of the Spirit through the sisters present at the Chapter. What did saying Yes to that call mean? Well, for one thing, it meant ending my 18-year stay in North Carolina – with its ministry opportunities and people-connections – and moving to London, England to take up my new role in February 2018. This was a very tangible and personal experience of belonging to an international Society on mission. For the next six years, my focus would be more internally focused on the overall well-being of all FCJ sisters and the various corporate works of the Society across the world.

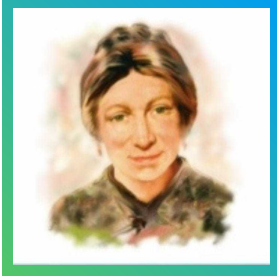
“ The companionship aspect of FCJ spirituality has always been attractive to me.

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Presently, I experience the close companionship in our Leadership Group as we provide various experiences for sisters to be supported and enriched in their vocation. Also, in a limited way, I am able to continue in the ministry of spiritual direction, which I love. As I accompany people in their efforts to follow God’s leading in their lives, I am amazed by the number of times I have ‘heard’ some invitation for myself from God in their stories!

The charism, the call, is deep and mysterious. It is not a one-time object to be grasped and held. The need and prayer still echo true with me: ‘Teach me, O God, to be a faithful companion of Jesus’.



“ Le but de notre petite Société est de rendre gloire au Cœur de Jésus par tous les moyens en son pouvoir. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

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