

## Madeleine, fcJ



### How I live out our charism of companionship

How do I live out our charism of companionship as a Faithful Companion of Jesus? I can answer this question at many levels.

At present I am a resource staff member at the [FCJ Christian Life Centre](#), a retreat and conference centre in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. I came here in 2015, after 22 years of being a professor at the University of Alabama in the College of Education. In some ways, life in Calgary is similar to life in Tuscaloosa, Alabama: I live in a community of FCJ Sisters, I garden, I am involved in a variety of ministries, each day I respond to new and unexpected challenges, and I go out to the local schools, teach model lessons, and offer various kinds of service. But in many ways, life in Calgary is very different from life in Tuscaloosa: Calgary gets COLD in the winter, with lots of snow and ice. The gardening season lasts three and a half, if we're lucky (in Tuscaloosa, one can garden 12 months a year!). Calgary is a huge city of 1.2 million people, as opposed to a university town. I work in a retreat centre, which is a very different context from working in a school—in schools, the same people typically show up and community builds. Children are required by law to attend school. Here at the FCJ Centre, we can plan all kinds of wonderful programs, and sometimes NO ONE registers to come to them.



In terms of ministry, I love working in and from the [FCJ Centre](#). I coordinate the Spiritual Direction Training Program, do an amount of spiritual direction, and recently was trained to supervise spiritual directors. I give retreats to adults, children, and family groups—sometimes individually and sometimes in large or small groups. When I visit the schools, I go to the local Catholic schools (there 112 of them in our district!) and do faith formation with both students and teachers. I serve on the Board of Directors and on both the Resource and Programming and the Faith in Action committees, which are all very stimulating activities. Having worked in public education most of my adult life, it is really fun and very satisfying to be working within a faith-filled context.

Two other ministries are dear to my heart: I work in vocation ministry, serving on the Diocesan Retreat Team and working with other FCJs to provide opportunities for young women to learn about Ignatian spirituality and FCJ religious life. I also serve as Area Coordinator for the [Companions in Mission](#). In the coming year, I will be working with Sheila, CiM, to offer formation to a new group of interested men and women. I will also be working with Judy, CiM, to try and start a group of CiMs in the USA who have moved away from where they were initially formed—we will meet via the Internet!

**“ Relationships are at the heart of my ministry, as they are at the heart of the mission which has been entrusted to the Church. Interacting with people provides endless scope for living out the charism of companionship.**

*Madeleine fcJ*

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Part of what this charism means, to me, is companionship with people in such a way that they gain the courage and confidence they need in order to take the next step in their human development. It might be a step in faith, or in their life of work, in relationships, or in prayer. My work is to affirm their insights and to encourage them as they risk moving into something new, becoming a new, improved version of themselves. I think about how I can love people into life, how I can be life-giving, life-generating for them, so they, in turn, can be that to others.



Building relationships and being faithful to them, even relationships within FCJ community, requires a certain availability, which, in turn, is an invitation to sacrifice. I may be facing endless tasks associated with each of my ministries, but when someone phones or drops into my office needing a kind heart, a listening ear, and a word of encouragement or counsel, I need to be ready to let go of the tasks and attend to the person. Accepting them as gift, believing that **ALL IS GIFT** no matter what it first appears to be, means putting aside 'my' work and making myself available to do the LORD's work.

I also live out our charism of companionship by attending daily Mass most days of the week. Sometimes, we have Mass here in Sacred Heart Convent; other times, I go across the street to the Cathedral of St. Mary's. Companionship with Jesus and with the people of the parish through the celebration of Eucharist is important to me as a Faithful Companion of Jesus. I also attend evenings of Adoration and Reconciliation offered by CCO (Catholic Christian Outreach), a group that supports and develop the Catholic faith of university students.

It turns out that in my life, ministries serve as the main source of my on-going, personal formation. For example, being so involved in spiritual direction has made me a more contemplative person. Formation is what makes me more able to, more ready to, more willing to, be stronger, better. It's the **magis** in action, as well as in desire.

**I have every confidence that the coming years will be as transformative and life-giving as my FCJ life has been up to this point!**



**“ Sedikit belas kasihan membuat dunia menjadi kurang dingin dan lebih adil. ”**

*Paus Fransiskus*

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