

## First Profession of Audrey, fcJ

Manila, Philippines

Sunday, 7-Oct-18



### **On the day of her profession, 9 December 2017, Audrey wrote this letter to family and friends.**

Dear family & friends,

Today I celebrated my First Profession as a religious sister in the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus. It is a surreal but joyful milestone for me. Here, I wish to explain a little about what this means for me, especially to those who are not familiar with Catholic religious life.

When I look back on my journey, the words ‘surprising grace’ come to mind. ‘Surprising’ because life always brings the unexpected: it never occurred to me to become a nun until one December day four years ago when the idea suddenly popped into my head. I dismissed it at once as completely ridiculous. And yet here I am four years later! These years have been challenge-full but also full of unexpected blessings, among which were getting to live in colourful Manila with its jeepneys and contradictions, in beautiful Ende (Indonesia) with its stunning mountains and beaches, and in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) with its distinctive culture and blend of religions. And, in each place, discovering– in different guises – the same indomitable human spirit that gives glory to God, its Creator.

These external travels have also led me to undertake another – inner – journey, in which I discovered that – far from coming like a bolt out of the blue, as I thought –God’s voice has been calling me, softly but insistently, to this point all my life. And it is in response to this gentle invitation that I wish to offer my self-gift today.



But what are these vows that I will make? ‘Poverty’, ‘chastity’ and ‘obedience’ probably sound like outdated medieval practices to most people ... as does the entire idea of religious life! In fact, religious life has always been evolving. Certain women and men of all religions have been called indifferent ways to the monastic enterprise –making of their lives an exclusive search for God – since the dawn of humanity’s search for the divine. In the Catholic tradition, this eventually took the shape of the three vows, which have been lived out in different ways over the centuries. In recent times, scientific discovery and theological advancements

have offered us new perspectives on the vows. They can be seen as ways in which we try to live intentionally and with integrity out of a greater awareness of our place in the community of life in an ever-evolving universe – a community of life in which each of us finds our origins in the same stardust and the same desires of a loving Creator.

For me, then, part of what ‘poverty’ means is recognising my dependence on all that supports my life: plants, animals, the human community and all living systems. All of this is offered freely to me as gift, and I hold it lightly knowing that I can count nothing really as my ‘own’. In return I try to live simply and sustainably so that others can too.

‘Chastity’, or ‘consecrated celibacy’ as it is perhaps more accurately known today, is a phenomenon found across religions in which some people dedicate their lives to God, to the exclusion of any other primary commitment. In Christian terms we might say it is done out of love for Christ. But it doesn’t ‘exclude’ loving. God is loved tangibly in others, and this way of life seeks to free us to ‘seek to be in transformative relationship with everyone and everything’ (*FCJ General Chapter Directions*, 2013).

As for ‘obedience’... anyone who knows me knows that I have an allergy to the term! But happily the days of blind obedience are now in the past. Our new cosmic perspective shows us that, in the community of life, we are all interdependent. It recognises both our need to respect each other’s independence and to collaborate. Obedience then becomes a deep listening to others and to the movements of God’s Spirit, so that we can each discover and help each other to live our unique roles in God’s plan ...to more intentionally play our unique melodies in God’s cosmic symphony.

**“ Making vows today isn’t some instant fix that will make me any holier – as my housemates will no doubt find out in short order, to their annoyance (if they haven’t already)! ”**

Rather, I should like to see it as ‘a commitment to the journey, to the process, as a trust-filled movement into possibilities’ (Barbara Fiand, *Refocusing the Vision*), with the expectant hope that God will complete, in time, what God started. And so I would be glad of your continued prayers. A big thank you again for all your prayer and support, both today and through the years. Each one of you has been a significant part of my life, and for that I cannot be grateful enough. I continue to hold you all in my heart, and wish you all the best in your own journeys.

With love and in companionship,

Audrey fcJ

You can follow Sr Audrey on her blog [Surprising Grace](#).



**“ What is God’s love? It is not something vague, some generic feeling. God’s love has a name and a face: Jesus Christ, Jesus. Love for God is made manifest in Jesus. ”**

*Pope Francis*

