

My very dear Sandy,

The tectonic shift was already happening when you came along - low, rumbling, evolutionary waves of change hitting like a tsunami against the ancient walls of a tradition. You were 10 years old when the volcanic forces of Vatican II shook the foundations... rattling the windows and doors, letting in *the Wind!* Some are still trying to catch their breath! You, of course, hardly noticed.

But then at twenty three your own tsunami hit forcing you to higher ground, a land of heightened awareness: full of longing, full of searching, wondering, confused, and full of hope. When you came along everything was up for grabs or already gone: the habit, the convent, the ministry, the numbers, a way of prayer, a way of thinking, of being. Though much was still unsettled in the Catholic world when *the Wind* blew you into St. Michael's convent, you didn't seem to mind. You weren't too aware of the aftermath left by that first tsunami, but only of a persistent longing... a Restless Something within. This, of course, you couldn't help but notice.

I am 60 years old now. The passion -- seasoned by that Restless Something -- I knew in you all those years ago has ebbed on occasion, but it has never shrivelled. However, it has *evolved* ... love and suffering, light and dark, a letting go and holding on, polishing this, revealing that. The back and forth of it all feels more trustworthy now, and we are both freer for it.

Over time you have been learning to live your passionate zeal between two poles -- "the more" and "it is enough"; my deep freedom and persistent peace seems to lie in being attached to neither. Thank you for all these years of practicing and practicing, this life of surrender. When you were young you thought of perfection, and now, in the youth of my old age, it is enough to be faithful. I am still practising, this life of letting go, but with less effort. I think I understand better now what Mary meant when she said 'Let it be done *unto* me.'

Do you remember the day you first professed your vows? Do you recall the words She gave you as gift -- *Who knows what days I answer for today? Giving the bud I give the flower...?* They gentle me into a spacious emptiness as I write to you now.

They remind me that all is *evolving* - seed to bud to flower to death to life again. It is a storied pattern of cosmic proportions -- from flowers to galaxies, from crib to cross to more Life. Those two poles I mentioned -- that dance between infinite desire and finite energy is a pattern that has been written into the very fabric of the Universe story itself. It was written into the 'you' that is now 'me'. I gratefully look back on these many years since the Wind first blew you through the convent door and tenderly say: I love you all as sisters the women I once was. And in this *now* moment, it is enough to add my 'yes' to it all and not try so hard, 'yes' to God's expanding universe, 'yes' to Godde's reign of justice and love, here now and yet to come. I find it all incredibly humbling.

I recall the exact day the Wind whispered to me: Sandy, don't confuse the *love letter* with the *envelope* it came in! I knew exactly what She meant. Your vocation to religious life is the envelope -- the spiritual journey is the love letter! Whatever happens to the envelope, the love letter can never be lost; it is written into the very fabric of your being. Like the Universe that enfolds it, religious life is evolving once again into an unnamed and unknown expression of Infinite Love. Trust your vocation, the envelope; it has been a very faithful, if imperfect, messenger of the Love that leaves you both Breathless and Wanting More.

with much gratitude,

Sandra

Letter to My Younger Self project: Legacy of Care, Courage and Compassion CHAM 2015