

Reflections Project: A letter to your younger self

For: Catholic Health Association of Manitoba
Legacy of Care and Compassion Project

January 7, 2015

Dear Andrea,

I can hardly believe that you are a novice here after all your interior struggles. You were a graduate nurse, buying what you wanted, going where you wanted and experiencing new adventures. Oh yes, deep down you wondered if maybe you should give your life to God, but you really didn't want to give up all you had going for you.

You had thought about being a missionary and had even applied to the Medical Missionaries in the States, but the high dowry, going to England for the Novitiate and the extensive medical consultations made it easy to say, "No thank you."

However the nagging feeling never left and your entrance here was just to get rid of the idea once and for all. You had a whole list of why you shouldn't apply here including they weren't missionaries and rash judgements of Sisters you knew. Once you entered you even prayed that they'd send you home and you gave them every reason to, but it didn't happen. God sure has a sense of humour!

Now deep down you know that this is where you were meant to be. Yes, there will be things hard to accept. Yes there will be Sisters who irritate you and rub you the wrong way, yes you will often feel there is a better way...I dare say Jesus didn't agree with the social structures of his time or what he was subjected to.

When I look at my married brothers and sister, I have to admit that their lives weren't always according to their liking or free of difficulties. Nor is any life. The important thing is your attitude, your acceptance of what cannot be changed and walking with your hand in the hand of Him who made you. All lives have lots of

joys and sorrows and lots of laughter especially if you learn to laugh at yourself in any situation.

When I was your age I thought that I was strong enough to meet any challenge and bound to win. Now that I am older and wiser, I see my weaknesses and lean on God in everything. And oh yes, I did become a missionary when I was 34 years old. I wondered about the Community sending such an "old person" to a foreign land. But it was there that I learned more about myself than at any other period. I wasn't strong, I was afraid, and experienced many other emotions that played havoc with my self-image. Living and suffering with the people changed me forever. The decision to return to Canada was heart-wrenching. Was it the right one? The people couldn't leave. Should we have stayed and given our lives for them? Could we really help them from Canada as they hoped? We returned in anguish.

This week I will be 81 and, yes, a missionary in northern Manitoba. So trust in God's plans for you. He will unroll the blueprint just one day at a time.

With love and trust that you will leave it all in His hands,

Your older self,

Sister Andrea Dumont, CSJ
Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto