

A letter to myself

Dear Evelyn,

Do you remember the year of 1962? It was your last year of high school. We were talking about the graduation ceremony. You said...yes...what am I going to choose as my future occupation? It is true that you often liked to go to the convent chapel when you were a boarder to say a short prayer before bed. Did you feel drawn to the Lord? You were trying to determine the course your life would take...would it be the health field or teaching? Do you recall something that a nun whispered in your ear one day on the way back from recess... "Have you ever thought about becoming a nun?" Shocked, you answered "no", and she dropped the matter... You soon forgot, didn't you? But then, at a youth retreat, that sentence came back to you... You were weighing your choices... A nun? Me, an only daughter? Leave my parents? ... How could you do that? You decided to consult your parish priest. He encouraged you to keep thinking about it and to pray. Over the following weeks, the call to serve God and others came back to you more clearly: couldn't I do that if I became a nun?

What a challenge it was for you! How were you going to break the news of your wishes to your parents? What would they say? You wanted to talk to your father first, as you were afraid of your mother's negative reaction. One day, when your father was alone, you mustered up your courage to tell him about your wish to answer the call to become a nun. Do you recall what he said? "Well, if you ever feel that that is not your vocation, you know that you can always come back to stay with us." What words of encouragement and confirmation of your calling! You also shared with him your concern about your mother's reaction. And your father said, "Don't worry. I'll take care of it and speak to her." Now you see that it was the Lord who was speaking through your father. What a joy for you to see that your parents consented to allowing you to go and begin preparing for religious life despite the sadness they felt at seeing you leave.

The day you left with your parents to go to Winnipeg to begin your postulancy, you asked to stop at the convent because you felt the need to go to the sisters' chapel and say a prayer. You spontaneously said these words to the Lord: "I'll prove to You that this is my calling." Such bold words! And yes, it was the beginning of a leap of faith towards He who would be your friend forever! And he was faithful in reminding you of his loving and helpful presence in following Him and serving Him in your various missions in the following years up until today. Yes, when God calls, He is always there with His grace to guide you...

Evelyn, who would have thought that one day you would have the chance to spend two years in Fribourg, Switzerland at the École de la Foi (faith school) where you had such an enriching experience to grow in your Faith and develop your relationship with Jesus Christ in such a deep and personal way! It was springboard to prepare you for the pastoral missions to which you were called in various parishes for more than 27 years. For over 12 years, I had the delight of working with your sisters in a ministry where I gained experience grappling with difficult decisions. Once again, I touched the power of God's grace.

After more than 50 years of Consecrated Life, you are still thankful to the Lord, who even today supports and guides you in your pastoral mission of helping laypeople to build living Christian communities in today's church. Yes, you are right to sing in your heart: "[translation of original French lyrics] Oh Father, I am your child, there are a thousand ways You show your love for me; I want to praise You with my song: the song of joy of my Baptism."

With all my heart,

Evelyn,
Daughter of the Cross (Fille de la Croix)