

Dear Laurette,

I want to share so many things with you. First, you must choose your future carefully if you want to be happy. And perhaps it is a good idea to prepare for it. You remember in Grade 3, I took the teacher's recommendation seriously to say three "Hail Marys" every night so that I could say "yes" to whatever God asked of me. "If you choose what God wants, meaning that for which He has prepared you, you will be happy."

I followed that recommendation faithfully for years. And one day, to my great surprise during a brief retreat, I heard an inner voice that clearly said: "Follow me, I need you." I immediately knew that it was the Lord who was calling me. You remember... I was initially filled with joy and felt myself awash in His freely given love.

A few months went by and it was time to submit my application. I began to feel that I no longer wanted to say yes; I wanted to be like everyone else. However, God's call was clear. Can anyone really say "no" to God? I enrolled. I found the novitiate long and difficult, but I never doubted His call. I hoped that I would be sent home, but it did not happen. Fortunately! Let me tell you what happened next.

In the beginning, it was almost a daily struggle, but from the time I fully accepted the call to give myself completely to Him and to follow Him as a Daughter of the Cross, I was happy, very happy. However, I was afraid that if I gave myself over completely, He would take up everything and there would be no more room for me. But in reality, when I gave myself completely to Him, He gave me all the room I needed.

I chose teaching children as my occupation and I loved it. I taught children who were loved and others who were neglected, some who were unwanted, and others still who lived in traumatic households. I remember a little six-year-old girl who, every day for a week, told me: *"My Dad was choking my Mum and she was spitting blood ...spitting blood. And my Dad threw her out. Then our babysitter left. Now who is going to take care of us?"*

Children are beautiful and precious. They need love. Sometimes they teach us good lessons without even knowing it. I remember a little boy who stayed behind at the end of classes. I asked him if he wanted something. When the last child had left, he asked, "Are we still friends?" Without really understanding where his doubt was coming from, I said, "Of course, why wouldn't we be friends anymore?" He left with a smile on his face, "See you tomorrow, Sister." I tried to think if I had said an unkind word to him but could not remember anything. What a good lesson! What a beautiful world it would be if we checked to confirm our friendships before leaving one another or going to bed.

Today, I regret nothing except how long it took me to understand His freely given love for each of us. I thank Him for His call, His faithfulness and His patience.

I like repeating what one of our Italian Sisters used to say: "If girls knew the joys and the challenges of religious life, they would be lining up outside the convent gates to get inside."

Affectionately,
Laurette Dubois
Daughter of the Cross