

Sister Marie-Anna Plamondon
D.O.B. July 26, 1930
Birthplace : Plamondon, Alberta
Profession of vows : January 16, 1955
Interests : helping Sisters, reading

Community and Missionary experience : service in health care across Canada

Dear younger self,

I can tell you, if you didn't have religion - you wouldn't be here today. Religion has helped you through life – in the time you were young and ill, through serving the health-care needs of so many to this very day.

As a child, you couldn't have guessed religion would play such an important role in your life. Usually there was an old priest in the parishes in rural Alberta and going to church didn't mean much. But once you met the Misericordia Sisters you had much to share - with the younger Sisters especially - and you all sustained one another.

You were always adventurous! The youngest of 13 children, you left home at 16 with your older sister to head to Edmonton. With no phones at this time, you told your mother, 'If I don't come home right away, it's because I've found a job.'

You did find a job – in a hospital cafeteria. That's where you first met the pregnant girls. You had no clue who there were; a woman would come in the back door with a cart and pick up the pregnant girls lunch to have in a separate dining room. Your interest was piqued.

The Misericordia Sisters were helping single pregnant girls, explained Sister Claudia. 'Why don't you join us?' Then the Superior General came to the hospital and asked the same question, 'Why don't you enter?'

Now, you were never one to be talked into anything; you had your own mind. 'I'll think about it,' you told the Superior General.

You did think about it for six months. You were ready for an adventure. Who wouldn't want to be sent to Montreal?

Your Mom was extremely happy with your decision. Your Dad – not so much. 'Couldn't you have joined someone else?' he asked, knowing the Misericordia Sisters Mission was to care for pregnant girls.

Religious life in Montreal was a bit overwhelming, but you stayed true to yourself. While you weren't supposed to write to your family during the first six months of noviciate, you made it quite clear your mother would expect to hear from you and were granted permission to write to her. 'But not more than once a month!' was the edict.

You knew Sisters were renamed when entering the service. You let the Superior General know you'd like to keep your Christian name Marie-Anna. 'We'll see,' is all she said.

When it came time to receive your name, kneeling in front of the Superior General, she asked you, `What is your father`s name?`

It`s Ferdinand,` you replied, `But I don`t want that name.` (And you truly didn`t; it reminded you of a Valentine`s card with a bull on the front named Ferdinand.)

You got to keep your name – you don`t get what you don`t ask for! - and another girl was given the name Ferdinand by the Superior General.

Three days later you were sent with 15 other new Sisters to be of service at a new 500-bed hospital in Rosemount. You cleaned until you were exhausted!

Unfortunately in the 1950s there weren`t the same infection control practices in place as they are in today and you got sick. Very sick! It took you years to recover, but you were given a clean bill of health in 1955 and set out to Winnipeg for another adventure.

You arrived at Misericordia Hospital, where you were to replace another Sister in the admitting office. `Here`s the keys,` she said, and waltzed out the door. If it wasn`t for the kindness of a Jewish doctor who took you under his wing, you would have been at a loss.

From Winnipeg, you were sent to Haileybury, Ontario, to be responsible for 12 Sisters, all of whom were much older. `Who do you think she is?` you imagined them saying. This was also a difficult time for you as both your parents passed away during your three-year term and you were so far away from home.

You were pleased to return to Winnipeg to be the registrar at the Misericordia School of Nursing and also continue your work with the hospital and, eventually, with Wolseley Family Place – a resource centre for young families.

Working alongside the staff in Winnipeg gave you much encouragement to carry on as you could see so many who already had the Mission in their hearts. You received as much, or more, than you gave.

You really enjoyed studying pastoral care at St. Boniface College and wish you`d had time for further studies, even a Masters degree. Perhaps that is one regret – not beginning your studies earlier.

Meeting all different kinds of people over the years was so rewarding, especially the Ukrainian immigrants and Vietnamese boat people you sponsored – at the urging of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg . These people struggled and worked so hard to get what they wanted in life. You were grateful to be a part of their lives.

Always be true to yourself. Keep your name! You are Sister Maria-Anna Plamondon, who was born in Plamondon, Alberta. Who else can say they have a town named after them?

Yours, Sister M. Anna