

Reflections Project: A letter to your younger self

Catholic Health Association of Manitoba

Legacy of Care and Compassion Project

January 14, 2015

Dear Betty Lou,

Do you remember how excited you were in 1974 to be going to Guatemala? And two years later your disappointment when the earthquake of 1976 left you with severe rheumatoid arthritis, necessitating your return to Toronto?

Five months of inactivity and physical therapy followed. In September, a lunch with your friend, Sister Marie Paradis, brought light, hope and an invitation in the midst of darkness.

“Would you like to come to Transcona and live in L’Arche?” she asked.

No other opening for ministry had presented itself and you wondered what you could do in L’Arche since you were in such pain and need of healing. Can you still visualize the stone Sister Marie pulled out of her pocket? Printed on it was COME AND SEE.

In October, you were greeted by all the L’Arche folks at Rousseau Court. You soon learned its history. Sister Marie founded L’Arche Winnipeg in August, 1973. The Oblate Missionary Sisters of Manitoba moved out of their convent, offering their eight bedroom house to the new L’Arche community.

Looking back over my life, I want to tell you how grateful I am for the acceptance, the blessings, and healing joy I experienced in L’Arche. Members of that community, especially Pat, taught me the importance and gift of sensitivity to others, listening, and non-verbal communication. They gave meaning to “It is who you Are, not what you Do” that matters.

Over the past thirty-nine years since leaving L'Arche, I have often relived a sacred moment shared with Pat. Everyone had left the dinner table. Pat and I were finishing off in silence. When he detected something was bothering me he walked over and whispered in my ear,

"Betty Lou, are you O.K.?"

That encounter was an experience of God's presence, concern and love for me. If Pat could be that sensitive and feel such compassion, how much deeper is God's love for me, even if I am unaware of it?

Betty Lou, as you journey through life, one hope I have is that you will learn to let the most vulnerable touch you in your weakness.

Sincerely,

Sister Betty Lou Knox, CSJ
Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto