

Letter to my Younger Self
Sister Catherine Laviolette, SNJM

Dear Cathy,

I can still see you at 15 – so innocent and sheltered, so attached to family, yet so eager to do what God wanted you to do, which you felt then, was to become a Sister of the Holy Names. I remember too the struggle that you faced: with the Sisters encouraging you to join the congregation and your parents totally opposed to your choice. You waited until you were 18, as that was what your parents wanted you to do, and during those 2-3 years, you never brought up the subject in your home as you had agreed not to do, and at 18 you asked again to enter. And so it was! Yet I still can feel what a painful tearing away it was for you from those you loved, especially your two little sisters, aged five and three, who were the loves of your life.

And here I am now – 51 years later. My life has been total gift – the joys and the hardships have been plenty, the surprises and the challenges constant, the exposure to so many wonderful persons, places, and opportunities for education and growth and service, beyond my expectations.

Who would ever have thought that I would leave Quebec at 38 and now call Manitoba home? Who would ever have thought that I would leave the classroom after 18 years and spend over 20 years in Parish Ministry and in Spiritual Care? Who would ever have thought I would be in Faith Formation of Adults through the Nathanael Program for many years now in our archdiocese? And who would ever have thought that I would also be in leadership in our SNJM province of Manitoba? All of these have been opportunities to serve our people and have been privileged places for me to meet the many faces of our God.

Life has certainly unfolded for me in ways I could never have imagined and the greatest gift that I have come to treasure is the truth that ultimately, all I have is God and God is enough!

Aware of God's promise that "I am with you always" and of God's proclamation "You are precious in my eyes and I love you", I have struggled over the years in darkness and in light, to believe this with every fiber of my being, and yet, as I look back I can truly say ... "God is faithful and steadfast in God's love. God is enough!"

Many are the moments when I have felt God's presence ...many are the wonderful moments I have shared in community with my sisters and in all the communities I have been privileged to journey in, and many are the moments I have witnessed the tremendous caring for one another among peoples.

As I reflect today on who I am, I share a paraphrase of the words of Mary in her Magnificat:

The Lord has done great things for me ...Holy is God's name!

God has blessed me abundantly and given me every reason to rejoice.

God has broken through my boundaries and given me more than I can hope for or imagine!

He has showed Himself as the ever greater One in my life.

He has made known this to me ...it is in my being servant that it becomes possible for God's kingdom to break through here and now. (Original Author of adapted text: unknown) ...

Join with me, young Cathy, in praising God!