

Dear Lorraine (at 18),

I think of you often; I can still see you in high school in St. Malo or in Ste Agathe for grade twelve. I offer you a few reflections that could help you make decisions for the future.

Listen to your heart and give your life to Jesus without ever looking back. You will learn the ways of personal discernment. God's ways will bring you wisdom and serenity.

Nourish your relationship with God; God's love and faithfulness will give meaning to your life. The great God of the universe is very near to you and lives within you. God's tenderness and mercy will heal your wounds, fill the void within you and give life and freedom to your heart. Rely on God "your rock".

As time goes on, you will also learn to trust communal discernment. With others, new paths will open up before you. You will belong to a community (the SNJM community) that has a particular vision of the Gospel. This community has a special concern for women, children and people who are impoverished or marginalized. General Chapters will give you the impetus to work with others on questions of justice, peace and integrity of creation.

Life is full of opportunities for growth, for discoveries, for learning and for service. Request for your services will be many! Be ready to give of yourself in teaching, in education in the faith, in administration and in leadership in your own community. Use the gifts that God has given you to serve others. Do not fear your limitations but do the best you can with the gifts you have received. Your gifts joined to others will contribute to the coming of the Reign of God. As we read in St. Paul, "we hold a treasure in earthen vessels."

Service will give you many opportunities for growth, for learnings and discoveries. You will pursue your studies and in your travels you will discover cultures that are very different from your own. These rich experiences will nourish your desire for inclusion and acceptance of others.

Life can be difficult at times; you will experience losses, transitions and inner struggles. Surrender to God who lives within you, and count on persons you will encounter on your journey. The experience of suffering will teach you compassion and understanding of others.

You're a strong introvert; you will certainly appreciate quiet times of meditation, strolls in nature or discovery of the arts. At the same time, you need to nourish relationships for you need others just as much as they need you. A good coffee with a friend, a visit with a sick person, a few hours spent with a small faith community, or with your large community will provide precious moments of growth and of new commitments.

Always be grateful. Give thanks every day!

Lorraine St-Hilaire, SNJM