



Why I am CSA!

Sister Anne Jude Van Lanen, CSA

Now, many years have passed since "I heard a call", but it is as vivid to me as if it happened yesterday. I didn't believe it. A "call" to religious life? It wasn't clear..."to become a Sister?" Was I dreaming?

It all started when a priest gave a sermon on God's calling each of us by name, and calling us to a particular walk in life. "Yes", he said, "and God may be calling one of you to become a Sister of St. Agnes...a missionary...who knows?"

After leaving Mass, I could not forget his final words, "Yes, and God may be calling one of you...who knows?" I had always dreamed of becoming a nurse, going to a foreign land to work with the poor...maybe join Peace Corp...??

The internal struggle began. "Oh no, not ME! I'm about to graduate from nursing. I need to get a job and pay off my student loan. Not ME! I'm dating and he's a really nice guy. What would I tell him? Besides, I want to have children and raise a family. What will my classmates think? What will my parents and brothers and sisters say?"

I prayed for days that God would just let me forget the whole thing, that the very idea was absurd, that I wasn't worthy of receiving such a personalized message from God. All to no avail. My mind and heart were in turmoil and my emotions in upheaval. I couldn't eat, sleep would not come, and I cried night after night feeling so alone. Finally after a week, I confided in a trusted nursing instructor who was a Sister. My entire story

came spilling out while she listened intently, and with deep respect asked all the details of my struggle, turmoil, and tears. When she felt I had exhausted all my excuses and protests against God, she asked gently, "Tell me, my friend, why would God NOT be calling you?" I had no good or reasonable response. She gave me time away, time to think, and she promised prayers and offered a listening ear whenever I wanted to chat. She waited until my "yes" could be spoken.

That was the beginning of my life's journey as a Sister of St. Agnes, living out the mission of Jesus through nursing, foreign missionary work, hospice ministry, community living, and many other experiences of prayer and ministry. I said simply, "Yes, Lord, I hear You." I repeat that daily. There are no regrets, because God's love for me far surpasses my human efforts.

