



Sister Mary Timmons

Let me take you back to 1982. Paul McCartney was in the charts with Ebony and Ivory; Madness had their hit with House of Fun; Margaret Thatcher had declared war over the Falkland Islands; ET and Blade Runner were blockbuster cinema hits and the first ever computer virus was discovered.

1982 was a good year for me. I had moved from an inner city flat which I shared with two others to a semi-detached bungalow in a new housing estate very near to the hospital where I worked. I shared the house with a good friend who shared the same Christian values that I had recently reclaimed. She also worked at the hospital and we both understood our professional work as our Christian ministry. I loved my job as an Occupational Therapist, helping people who had heart attacks, strokes, and other forms of neurological conditions like multiple sclerosis. It was rewarding to help them recover from their illnesses.

I was living in Dundee which was where I was brought up, so I was able to see my family as often as I wanted to. As I said, 1982 was a good year for me, I had achieved what I had set out to do when I left school, and had even managed to pay off most of my student debts...so why did I feel there was something missing? I had a busy life, juggling work, family and church activities and a good social life too. Why did I want more? I did not even know what this 'more' was that I was seeking, I was just restless. My friends said that I just needed to fall in love...and I did....it was a wonderful thing to cherish and to be cherished by another...but the deeper yearning did not leave me.

In 1992 Pope John Paul II visited the United Kingdom. It was a wonderful occasion; the whole church seemed to be involved in preparing for the visit. I will never forget the celebrations in Murrayfield rugby stadium in Edinburgh, and the great swell of faith that I felt in the Pope's presence. Later that year, by 'chance' I met a Daughter of Charity, and found that, surprisingly, we had a lot in common. I remember vividly the first time I visited the house she shared with five other sisters in Glasgow. I loved them! Here were women, real women, not holier than thou, aloof women, who had made a radical commitment to God, so they could work with people who were poor. They lived in an ordinary house with a normal life style. The difference was that their life was underpinned by a life of prayer together. Could I do what they did? Was this the 'more' that I was seeking? "No! Of course not!" I told myself. "No, of course not" my friends said, "have another glass of wine...forget it..."

I could not forget this notion, it plagued me. I began to pray about this, I mean this was serious stuff! I talked to a priest who knew me well; I began to visit the sisters and get to know more about the history of the community and the implications of their faith commitment. Eventually I came to a conclusion. I would apply to join these women. If I didn't I would regret it for the rest of my life. If it did not work out (part of me hoped it wouldn't!!) I could leave and pick up my life again. I recall that I was excited and scared in equal measure, but once I had made up my mind to try this different path, I experienced a deep peace.

The next stage was to tell my family and friends. Their reactions were many and varied; "what, you mean, give up your job and your house and all you have worked so hard for?" or "don't you want to marry and have a family?" or "you'll never make it! I give you three months max!" However, deep down, the people who knew me and cared about me most just wanted me to be happy and were hugely supportive.

I was accepted by the Daughters of Charity and joined them informally in 1983 making a more formal commitment in '94. I made my vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and service of the poor for the first time in 1990. The rest, as they say, is history. Over these thirty years my life has been full and interesting and challenging! I have worked all over the UK, with people who have been disadvantaged in many different ways. Of course there have been up and downs and my understanding of my 'call' or 'my vocation' has changed over the years as I have matured.

Today I work as an Occupational Therapist in a nursing home in Essex. The people we care for are severely disabled and I love being able to improve their quality of life and help them live their lives to the full. I live with six other women and we support each other in our life -long commitment to God, so we can continue to serve those who are most disadvantaged. It is hugely rewarding.

I could not ask for 'more'.