

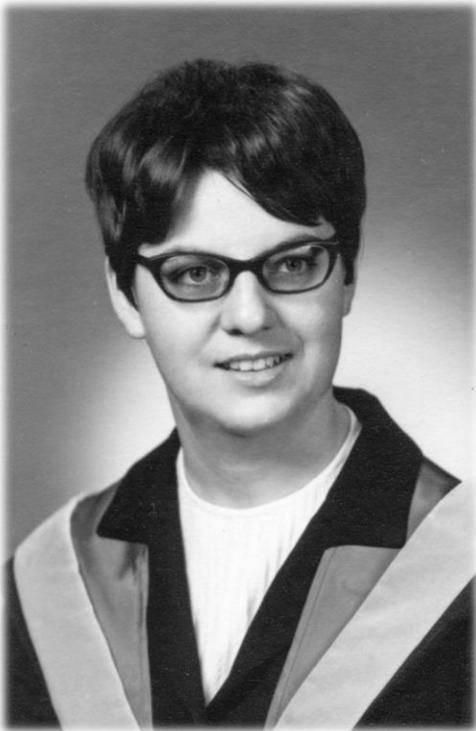


Why did I stay a Martha?

Sr. Claudette Gallant, CSM

I entered the Sisters of St. Martha in 1960. Pope John XXIII had just announced the Vatican II Council. He wanted to open the windows of the Catholic Church and let in some fresh air. This movement proved to be a time of turbulence and new life, especially for Religious Life.

At eighteen, I had a deep sense of the Divine presence, loving and caring for me. I felt nudged that I was being called to Religious Life. I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a nun but felt I had to respond to this yearning within me. While Religious Life at this time was highly structured on a monastic lifestyle, I wondered how I could possibly fit in this structure. Then Vatican II asked religious communities to renew and update themselves according to their original charism in addressing the signs of the times. The Sisters of St. Martha took this mandate very seriously and began in earnest to talk about what that would mean for us. For me, this was a blessing and an answer to my struggles and prayer. At this point, I was reading Teilhard de Chardin, SJ: *The Cloud of Unknowing* and so many books that fed my whole being. New life was certainly unfolding in the Marthas and I was soaking it up. *The Books of Wisdom* and the *Song of Songs* were especially speaking to me and affirming me.



I loved nature and it was always there where I experienced the mystery of God. I had a deep religious/spiritual experience with a pinecone grounding me in the presence of God. Often, the flowers in St. Theresa's Garden and sunsets spoke to me of the presence of God in nature. So now, Creation Spirituality is where I am most comfortable and where my reading takes me. The Marthas have continued on the path of Renewal embracing Creation Spirituality and Climate Change, with a sense that we are all connected in this life and we have a moral responsibility to care for each other.

With guidance through friends, retreats and spiritual direction, I was affirmed that this is where I am meant to be. I have been given many opportunities for developing and sharing my gifts. Actually, I have been able to share my gifts in the Congregation far more than I would ever imagine. Certainly, I made some mistakes and was able to learn from most of them. Life is a process of learning, growing and conversion in whatever life we are asked to live. I keep learning that over and over again.

I feel blessed at this time in my 58th year of Religious life. I know that I am guided by a loving Presence and that I can continue to grow into all of life which is permeated with love's energy.