

## **I Am My Beloved's, My Beloved Is Mine**

On April 16, 2010 before my God, my community, my family, and my friends I professed my perpetual vows, as a Sister of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception. What a day it was! And what a journey my call to religious life has been! I never would have dreamed that in eight years, God would transform this heart of mine so drastically! Yet, that is exactly what he did!

On August 4, 2002 I entered our community as a postulant. I remember the day so well. I was sooooo excited, yet sooooo nervous all at the same time. Finally, I was going to begin to live my vocation! I couldn't wait! I was ready to sacrifice. Ready to give all to God, no matter what! On fire for his will! I could live without my stuff: no more cell phone, no more credit cards, no more checkbook, no more car. And I was ready to obey the superior at all cost. No matter what I was asked to do I would do it with great gusto and love for God. My heart and mind seemed to say: "Bring it on God, bring it on!"

Over time, I began to realize that my intentions and passion for religious life were wonderful. But, it had to be lived. When the rubber met the road, was I going to follow through with this promise I had made to God, to follow his will no matter what? It began to feel like every good intention and excited passion I had for religious life was to be tested. Everything seemed so easy on paper, in my mind, in my heart. Yet, the reality of living my vocation was not quite as easy as I thought it would be. I thought I was ready for sacrifice, for suffering, for unselfish love and dedication to my sisters and my God, but I came to find out that I wasn't quite as ready as I thought I was.

This is when God began transforming my life! My heart was the clay being shaped and molded into God's image! Every struggle and every joy brought me closer to that image God was creating. There were days where God seemed to be rubbing off those sharp edges and it hurt! There were days where God seemed to be infusing his love and joy, his life, into my spirit! And there were days when I wanted to jump off of the ( ) and run as far away as I could! But, what I came to find out was that God was setting me free! God was loving me!

The more I was able to open my heart to God, to take down those walls that I had built, to surrender to him and his plan for my life, the more I was able to experience his intense love and desire for me, his beloved daughter. He was loving me into being! He was giving me new life! And his love felt amazing!

The more I lived into my vocation, surrendered to God's hands and allowed him to love me, the more I grew in love with him. And the more I grew in love with him, the more authentic my life for him became. No longer are my postulant ideals just ideals, but they have begun to become reality in my life. Because of God's deep love for me, and my new found love for God, I am able to follow his call, to live this vocation more authentically. His love spurs me on. His love upholds me through all things. And his love empowers me to live this vocation of religious life! And what a gift it is!

My perpetual profession of vows is only the beginning, the beginning of the rest of my life with God. And I can't wait to see what he has in store for me! I have no doubt that it will contain more transformation, more molding of my soul. But, I also know without a doubt that his tremendous,

unconditional love will be with me in each moment of this journey. His love will sustain me and continue to draw me closer and closer to him. For he is my beloved, and I am his.