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I was only 20 years old when I joined the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell, New Jersey, and some would say I was "green" or "wet behind the ears" or even "naive" in making the decision that I did.

## **Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

Psalm 16

Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Luke 9:51-62

Perhaps a grain of truth exists in all those comments, but what I do know is a deeper truth: I followed my heart, and that heart was responding to the Spirit. Begun in 1975, this journey has been rich, full of twists and turns, ups and downs, with times of tremendous letting go, only to be caught up in the marvelous mystery of divine love that has taken my ordinary life and made it extraordinary.

At the same time, this journey is grounded in the knowledge that I am and always will be an ordinary person on the road of life, traveling alongside everyone else as we make our way in this world together.

Mission has always been central to my life as a Dominican. I am a biblical scholar, working primarily in the area of biblical prophetic texts, while simultaneously wondering about and interrogating the prophetic text called "life." My work as a biblical scholar and teacher is more than a career; it is a vocation. Elijah and Elisha are my friends, and yes, they have shared their cloak with me — a woman — often unrecognized by the biblical text but not ignored in the text of life.

In 1975, I kissed my father and mother goodbye like Elisha, and I never looked back. In my life, the story from 1 Kings about Elijah and Elisha heard in today's first reading has found a home.

In the years that followed, the one who has sustained me and in whom I have taken refuge in times of challenge has always been the divine presence acting directly in my life and through all of creation. Unlike the portrait of a male deity in Psalm 16, this presence understood by me as Spirit, as Energy, has always sustained me and guided me in good and tough times. In the marrow of my bones, the sentiments of today's ancient psalm ring true.

Paul's letter to the Christians at Galatia invites me to think about freedom, law, love, flesh and Spirit. In the course of mission, I have learned that many challenges come our way. These challenges often try to keep us from living the free lives we are called to live.



(Mark Bartholomew)

I walk in the company of friends and strangers who repeatedly remind me to "resist" all forms that the "yoke of slavery" takes. Central to my charism as a Dominican, and central to my congregation's directives, is to work for justice, to live and act

justly while living a life of love. My commitment to this vision remains steadfast.

My decision to walk with the Spirit has oftentimes put me at odds with the "law," only because the law has been binding for me and for many others. Working to change the law of our culture has been an arduous task, especially in our world today. Many laws crush the human spirit "on the border" and behind closed doors where legal policies are formed that often discriminate, discredit and erase.

Furthermore, the notion that the Spirit and flesh are opposed to each other reflects a certain philosophical thought and culture of a past time. As a professor of biblical studies and theology, I have the task to help educate people about a healthy understanding of self. Flesh and Spirit work together, allowing people to have an embodied existence and spirituality that celebrates the wholeness and holiness of life in this 21st-century world.

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Finally, I have discovered in the course of my journey that commitment to mission has its costs. In my own life, challenging the status quo has never been easy. Not being welcomed because of your commitment to mission, while coming to terms with the fact that you don't really fit in with the ways of the world, is never a heartwarming experience.

To choose to walk with the disenfranchised, with the erased ones, with those who are discriminated against, and with those whose hearts are, for whatever reason, not able to accept the gift of love, is to live a life "in exile" with so many other people who have nowhere to rest their heads. But, as the Gospel of Luke reminds me and all of us, the journey continues.

After 63 years of life, 43 of which have been lived as a Dominican, I continue to walk onward. For sure, one day I will wake up and find my new home in the realm of God.

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