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Sr. Hannah: Handling Change

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Sister Hannah: Handling Change

Abstract: Sister Hannah is a woman religious I interviewed recently about her life and experiences. Our interview focused primarily on her thoughts about modern-day changes in the Catholic Church.

I had the pleasure of interviewing a sister of a congregation that has in recent history been based in the Midwest. Sister Hannah has been a sister for forty-seven years and currently is a Spiritual Care Director at an assisted living center. She explained that in this position she comforts, supports, and stays beside a family as their loved one passes away. Sister Hannah told me that she believes God gave her a gift for comforting those in need, and that although she had difficult positions in the past, she is thankful for where she is today. She explained that she was always blessed in the past to know when it was time to move on, and whenever a door closed behind her a new one opened in front of her that moved her closer to where she is today. She summarized her past in this way; that everything she has done has been meaningful and served a good purpose, and that she is thankful for where God has placed her today.

One of the topics that Sister Hannah thoroughly discussed with me was the laity's relationship with her congregation. This topic stemmed from when I asked her if she felt that laypeople would someday fill the role that women religious have traditionally filled. Sister Hannah answered this with a yes and continued by saying that this change is hard and sometimes difficult to accept, but that it is something we should be happy for. Sister Hannah explained this statement by saying that sisters may not do everything they used to do or want to do, but there are so many wonderful people who are happy to be there and doing what many of the sisters

would have originally done. She said that future planning involves a lot of letting go of previous places, positions, and independence; however, there is growth among those losses and that is what we should focus on. She concluded her thoughts on the subject by saying that she truly believes that no matter where her order of sisters is in the future, its legacy will be carried on expanded on by others.

The next topic Sister Hannah elaborated on was based on what she felt was one of the greatest issues the Catholic Church needs to address today. Her answer relates to her previous points on change with the laity because she felt the Catholic Church needs to be more open and let go of some of its rules and laws. She felt that there would be much more growth if the Catholic Church came to take a more accepting stance with the LGBTQ community and others in a similar relationship with the Catholic Church. These thoughts relate to the previous topic because it is still a process of letting go of what is old and familiar and accepting what is new and different because the new growth cannot be ignored. She felt that at least some of the laws and rules in place in the Catholic Church today push people away and that that is wrong because many of the people they push away genuinely want to be there. I believe how she summarized the topic on the laity perfectly summarizes her ideas on this topic; the future of the Catholic Church will involve letting go, but that we should not be sad for the letting go and instead be happy for the new growth.

Altogether, interviewing Sister Hannah was a pleasant and insightful experience. Her telling of her life helped widen and deepen my understanding and appreciation for her and other sisters. Sister Hannah's thoughts on the laity and the changes affecting sisters today gave me a positive and heartwarming way of looking at change not only in the Catholic Church today but also in everyday life. There is much to be gained and much to be appreciated in the thoughts that

Sister Hannah shared, and her overarching theme of growth and change can serve as a guide for many people today.

Works Cited

“Sister Hannah Adams.” Telephone interview by author. December 27, 2017.