

## **The Ultimate Frontier**

### **Two Testimonies Collected by Carmelle Bisson, AMJ**

#### **Why I Choose to Live at 95 Years of Age**

Being a gift of Love, life is a free gift and I am not at liberty to do just anything I want with my life. I grew up in a large family where music had a prominent place, with singing, dancing and musical instruments. We used to spend entire evenings simply sharing love among us. I thought it was beautiful, but I told myself in my heart, “this will pass, it’s temporary, but you, Lord, will remain with me for my entire life, and thereafter.”

Of course I look forward to meeting Him. Whatever his timing for me, I surrender, but I really wish to keep my memory. I feel it would be lazy of me, a lack of generosity, wishing to go before my time... But I have another wish, that of dying in my sleep. Before going to sleep, I ask forgiveness... so why not go in my sleep!

I don’t understand why people around me keep repeating “I want to die,” and why they are sad. As for myself, I dare think and believe that all my sisters seek the will of God in all matters. If I’m not willing to follow God’s will, I say that’s a recipe for purgatory. I’m spending my last years doing small favours for my sisters and offering everything to the Lord. “My response to the God of Love: For you, Lord Jesus, I agree to be silent so you know that you are my Love. When I am silent, that’s when I encounter Love. Grant me the grace to keep silent, and to love you.”

All I said here was spoken off the cuff, but it comes from deep inside my heart.

*A Sister, aged 95 years.*

#### **Why I Choose to Live at 92 Years of Age**

Life Is the Most Beautiful Gift from Heaven!

When He created me, God began pulling a thread which only became stronger over the years. How long is this thread? Nobody knows when it will end. But beware! God said: “I am the alpha and the omega.” This is only a life in progress. It doesn’t belong to me. Did Jesus not also say: “I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full?” Between these two poles of the alpha and the omega, I must strive to become more fully human until I become transfigured into the image of Christ the Redeemer. I welcome life – today – tomorrow, and until the term decreed by Him who is the omega.

Will I fear the unfolding of my life into my late years? Why should I? I consider my life: At the age of three, I was able to ride my tricycle under my father’s watchful eye, not without fear and without falls, yet with trust in my father’s power. A few years later, I rode a bicycle. How many falls and how much fear until I could master my bicycle! So it will be with my life as it unfolds, “fears and falls” under God’s watchful eye. Now a true senior, I welcome life with gratitude to my heavenly Father until He chooses to call me by name: \_\_\_\_\_, come and take this place I have prepared for you... 10 years?... 15 years?... I

don't know. But that's a mere drop in the ocean compared to blessed eternity. At 92 years of age, I have traded my bicycle for a walker, a human marvel invented for my well being. In fact, it's also a true gift from heaven since, despite my age, I can still enjoy family life and the possibility of participating, through small acts of kindness, in the life of people around me.

Very slowly, another path is opening up under my feet, that of the Cross with its cognitive and physical impairments. Should I be astonished and disheartened? Of course not! Another word of Jesus feeds my confidence. Did He not say, "I am with you always?" Furthermore, isn't it an outstanding grace to follow Jesus through this painful life at the centre of which He has remained since I was baptized and speaks of transfiguration leading to the glorious resurrection? So then, why worry? The Church is always present to restore hope, a faint light that flickers at times, yet never dies out. The Church is forever present to refresh my soul (the sacraments).

I hope to be graced with the beautiful virtue of hope, to keep me from wishing to end my life before the appointed time, for I am God's creature. Of course I think about death, but it's about that which will lead me to the Summit.

*A Sister, aged 92 years.*

### **References for Further Reflection**

Andriat, Frank, "Matière et Infini" in *Avec l'intime*, DDB, Paris, 2009, pp. 77-92.

Grün, Anselm, *Vieillir dans la sérénité. Un art de vivre ici et maintenant*, translated from German by Annick Lalucq and Charles Chauvin, Médiaspaul, Paris, 2011.

de Hennezel, Marie, *Nous voulons tous mourir dans la dignité. Un cri de cœur contre la législation*, Robert Laffont/Vesilio, Paris, 2013.