

Pauwels, Remi

I hope that I'm cooperating with God's wish for me.

Sister Remi Pauwels is delighted to be celebrating her 75th Jubilee. She has spent her life getting to know God and now talks about what she has learned.

What do you know for sure about God?

That there is a God. I've always believed that. I question a lot about God's providence in these later years – about what I used to think about God, that they loved me and watched over me. But it's confusing as you get older because you can do less and less. What does God expect of us when we age and can't do as much as we used to do? Perhaps when I was younger, my relationship with God was all about what I was doing, so the difference between that and old age is that there's not as much doing as accepting and believing and that's difficult. I think I have more doubts than I did when I was younger. I was too busy to think about doubts.

What purpose do these doubts serve?

Perhaps I'm being challenged to look at God and ask the legitimate questions.

What are the legitimate questions?

Is this all a story, or is it for real? The challenges to my faith are much more evident now that I have time to let that happen. I wasn't challenged in that way when I was younger.

It sounds as if what you're saying is that when people slow down, they have to shift their thinking and permit themselves to think deeply about their faith.

Yes! I pray about that every day, asking the Lord to increase my faith, to believe when it is difficult and to see God's hand in each day. When I was in the classroom, I could predict each day. Now, each day is different.

Many people would assume that at this stage of your life, days would be more predictable than when you were teaching. Tell me about your days.

Every day is different. I always have an agenda, like visiting sisters in Health Care or Memory Care, cleaning up my emails, doing household chores and making phone calls. Yesterday, I had computer troubles that took longer than expected. Things come up uninvited.

Why do you feel you have more time to think about God?

Because I *take* the time to reflect each morning, I pray for God's help to be open to accept what God sends me each day.

Do you attribute your ability to get through the day to God?

I couldn't do it without God. God is always working behind the scenes. I'm not always conscious of it, but I feel it when doing the unplanned or unexpected time to reflect ... *one* of the many blessings of retirement.