Columns
Religious Life



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Walking down the hall one day, another sister told me, "You know none of us will get out of this joint alive." Think about it. Everyone here is old. I really do not accept "joint" as a description of our home.

We are aging people being cared for by top-notch nurses, doctors and aides here. Better or equal care is not waiting for us anywhere. There are 23 of us here now with shared ministry and work backgrounds. We have everything we need. We're all getting older, so we must put up with the minor irritations that aging brings. But the benefits far outweigh the minor aggravations. The perfect place does not exist, so where would we go? There are no better caregivers or care anywhere.

I live in peaceful retirement with other sisters at the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in beautiful Villa Maria in Western Pennsylvania.

I think it's important to be comfortable with aging — our own and with those around us. As we get older, tics and annoyances will happen anywhere — even a joint as classy as ours. And so, we must face the facts. This is as good as it gets. Gratitude is called for. There are things about growing older that are a challenge. The losses are hard to embrace, but there are choices. There are memories to count. Blessings to hold on to.

I will borrow the words of St. Peter from John's Gospel: "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

So, it's true. Yes, we'll never get out of here. My question is: To whom would we go? Where would we share our memories? Who would understand both the joys and the sorrows? The beauty and the comfort of belonging?

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Loss is no stranger to us: the death of a loved one, the loss of good health, the loss of our home. But we move forward — perhaps with a limp and a tear or two, but with memories galore. And so, we turn to each other because we all know the same joy, sorrow, pain and triumph. Together we say yes all over again.

And so, it is a new journey, and we have each other. There is so much to be and do here — to continue to pray and grow with old friends. Activities are created for body and spirit, appealing to every taste, to have fun and to learn. There is group

swimming in the pool, walks on the trail through the beautiful countryside, and a functioning library with books, including in large print, for every taste.

The beautiful chapel is accessible to all for prayer and visits. Local priests are available for Mass, and closed-circuit allows Mass to be broadcast in every bedroom, with eucharistic ministers coming to every room to bring Communion to those who can't make it to the chapel. There is room and opportunity for family and friends to visit, with overnight accommodations available.

This is a happy place, quiet and serene. So, it may be true. None of us may get out of here alive. But so far, I don't know anyone who wants to.