Voices of Sisters
Ministry



Jonathan Roumie, second from right, portrays Jesus Christ in "The Chosen," an internet series recounting the stories of the Gospels. The third season is expected to be released in March 2022. (Courtesy of Angel Studios)



by Sr. Janet M. Peterworth

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October 25, 2021

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There is a poignant episode in the internet series "The Chosen" where Jesus invites Matthew to join His group of "students." Matthew is portrayed as being rich and well dressed because he is a tax collector.

Matthew also has some personal traits that set him apart from the other "students" Jesus has invited to follow Him. They are tough and ruddy fishermen. Matthew is a delicate and pale accountant. Peter does not think that Matthew should be part of the group, so he gets close to Jesus and says, "Rabbi, are you inviting him? He is ... well ... different." And Jesus' response is quick and decisive: "Peter, get used to different."

Jesus' reply to Peter has stayed with me. I recall it when I see signs on buses and billboards in Spanish, and I have never seen that before in my hometown — Louisville, Kentucky. It is something different for me. After all I live in the "Gateway to the South," not California or Texas. But there is indeed a growing Latinx community in my city. And I have to say to myself: "Janet, get used to different."

When I go to the mall in my section of the city, I see women in hijabs and long dresses and men in turbans. I encounter store personnel who do not understand my question about finding a product because English is not their first language. This is new to me because my city is nowhere near as international as New York or Los Angeles. This is different for me. And I have to say to myself: "Janet, get used to different."

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It is not easy to remember to put on my mask when I go into public places, and it is not easy to attend Mass on a screen or to pray with my community in little rectangular boxes on Zoom. I find it inconvenient to wait in line for a COVID test or to get a vaccination. Washing my hands or using sanitizer multiple times a day gets old. Living in a pandemic with its new variants constantly popping up is very different. Then I hear Jesus' words: "Janet, get used to different."

Daily news tells me that wildfires are raging, earthquakes are destroying communities, rain is mounting, causing devastating floods, while droughts are almost causing water wars. Weather forecasters tell me that the sun is causing record heat waves and icecaps are melting into the oceans. I read that forests are being clear-cut in the Amazon because humans need or want more space for cattle so they'll get more meat to eat. Coral reefs and fish are being poisoned by plastics because I want more conveniences. And while I hope it is not too late (I fear it may be), these kinds of natural occurrences are different. And for the time being, anyway, I must say to myself: "Janet, get used to different."

Three years ago, my congregation gifted our motherhouse and the land on which it sits to our sponsored schools. The congregation now leases parts of our motherhouse from the schools. When the congregation wants to use space for meetings or prayer, we must negotiate with the schools. Our house is no longer just our motherhouse and that is different for me. Once again, I find myself hearing Jesus say: "Janet, get used to different."

As of last year, I am retired. And for the first time in over 30 years, I do not have an office to go to. Nor do I have a secretary to call on when I have a computer glitch, or need something printed, or want someone to screen my phone calls when I am busy. My office is now a small desk in my bedroom. I do my own printing, try to fix my own computer glitches with help from "Dr. Google" and screen my own cell phone calls.

A year into retirement, I know how different life is. I now have the time to pray leisurely, volunteer where I want, cook creatively and attend informative webinars. I often find myself saying how different life is for me now. So different, I hardly recognize it and I have to say to myself: "Janet, get used to different."

One more way life is different: In the last year I have been on a team of retired executives acting as consultants for the Louisville Pride Foundation. I have come to see the needs of the LGBTQ population in a way that I never saw them before. I have also participated in several seminars on ministry to transgender people. These populations have needs that are the same as my needs, yet in some ways their needs are different. And so, when I see the rainbow flag draped on the front of my parish church, I am grateful that I have heard Jesus' words: "Janet, get used to different."

This story appears in the **Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities** feature series. View the full series.