

The Present Moment

Editor's note: *The Present Moment* is a short documentary video by April Barrett, a third-year McGill student, for one of her class projects as she and the participating sisters now share with us.

This is the first shot of the film that shows the chapel within the convent. This is one of my favourite shots because I think its stillness and symmetry depicts the peace and quiet of the community very well.



these stories down to a five-minute film that gave an all-encompassing feeling of being was indeed a daunting task.



I like this shot because of the significance of the room it depicts and the message written on the wall. This room, in the infirmary, is where elderly Sisters stay when they are close to passing on. The message of encouragement on the wall communicates the deep and steadfast love at the heart of the Catholic tradition.

When I first began this film project, for my *Sensory Ethnography* course at McGill, I intended it to be an investigation of the lives of Catholic women. I am an Indian Catholic who grew up in Toronto. Many of my relatives are members of the clergy, including my great Aunt, who was a cloistered nun in rural North India for over 50 years. Growing up, my religion was an essential part of my family life and culture, but I found that in my social circles and the media, Catholicism was associated with dogma and guilt. I wanted to use the opportunity I had to make a film that reflected the beauty, peace, and community granted by religion.

This is another one of my favourite shots from the film. The Sisters allowed me to film from the choir loft enabling me to get this bird's eye view. I like this shot a lot because you get to see the Sisters as they pray, but in a non-intrusive manner.



Sensory Ethnography is a kind of anthropological research that aims to convey the everyday experiences of its subjects with a focus on making non-narrative, nonverbal films that look at the senses rather than facts. When I met Sister Claire-Monique Lerman, and then many of the other Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Montreal, they greeted me with warmth and encouragement. I felt nervous to produce a film that accurately reflected their lives. So many of the sisters had spent time overseas and had incredible, intricate histories they were willing to share with me. Distilling all of

Over the course of the months I was filming, I began to look for a common theme that would tie my documentary footage together. What I realized as I put together the final product was that, in the FMM community, devotion is not in grand gestures or philosophized on intellectually, but the presence of God is taken for granted in every moment and every interaction. Therefore, the only duty is to be mindful of the present moment and with whom you share it.

This shot is another one of my favourites as it depicts Sister Claire-Monique, my main tour guide and friend, standing while she waits for me, in front of a statue of Mary. I enjoyed how the figure seems to mirror the statue, and felt as though it symbolized the role of nuns in the Catholic Church, emulating Mother Mary in their care and service.



From this realization came the title of the documentary, and the focus of many of the scenes within the film. I hoped that the film I produced would serve as a whirlwind tour through a convent filled with life and colour, acquainting the viewer with women who live simply and happily, as they sanctify the present moment.

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