Sisters of Saint Francis
1001 14th Street Northwest | Rochester, Minnesota | 55901
507-282-7441 | www.rochesterfranciscan.org

interchange

Gratitude for Life's Daily Blessings

Volume 23, No. 4 - Winter 2019-2020

Dear Sisters,

Once again, **Sister Therese Jilk** has been meeting with Sisters in residence at Assisi Heights, gathering stories, in order that we might learn more about their life experiences.

You'll find these stories not only heartwarming, but at times, surprising. We hope you enjoy this little journey down memory lane.

Kathy Gatliff
Editor, Director of Communications

One Day at a Time: Sister Bernadette Servaty *interviewed by Sister Therese Jilk*

Sister Bernadette Servaty was born in the small town of Osseo, MN. She was one of six children: three boys and three girls. Now, as of this interview, she tells me she is the only one of her generation still living.

Bernadette remembers attending Catholic School, and meeting some of our Franciscan Sisters there. At the time of her early childhood, her memory of church and family faith formation was very simple and direct: **"***We said our prayers... and did what had to be done.***"** With that perspective, her early formational years following her call to become a Rochester Franciscan Sister fit well into the Novitiate of Sister Chrystostem, even though Bernadette remembers her as being a bit stern. But, she quickly goes on to say **"***I'm glad to be a Franciscan; I like it here!"*

When I asked her how aging is for her, she responded, *"It's all about accepting each day as it is; one day at a time!"*

For Bernadette, years spent in active ministry included the opening Saint Anne's Hospice in Winona in 1962, where she served in various positions for fifteen years. Bernadette also ministered at St. Frances Sanatorium in Denver, Colorado, and Sacred heart Hospice in Austin, Minnesota. Aside from those key roles, she served in various other ministries in a variety of positions. When I asked her what led her to particular ministries, she promptly said, "obedience." Obviously, her memory of those very busy years was that, yes, she served in obedience to her mission**,** but she was very glad to be working. Her greatest gift to share with others is "a capability to work and lead," which she learned from her parents.

Now it is clear that Bernadette accepts aging as her daily work these days, and as such, she is still happy to be working!

Very fittingly, Bernadette explains the work of the Sisters of Saint Francis as "taking care of people." Perfect example of the practicality of living out her words!

Thank you, Bernadette, for your wonderful and quiet example of walking the talk of being a Franciscan Sister day-by-day!

A Teacher in Spirit: Sister Marice Hughes

interviewed by Sister Therese Jilk

Sister Marice Hughes loved teaching, especially children in the middle and upper grades; she taught for many years in a number of schools, and taught teachers how to write lesson plans. In fact, being a good teacher is one way she hopes to be remembered.

Starting from a young age, Marice counted family relationships, a deep faith in God, love of learning and caring for others to be significant values. Growing up, her responsibilities included keeping the house clean and helping make meals. This proved to be invaluable in preparation for her ministry assignments in teaching and also for the years she spent caring for her Mom! (Those last years were very inspirational years for Marice.)

Growing up with two brothers - but no sisters - probably subconsciously led her to add that dimension to her life. And so, Marice entered the Sisters of Saint Francis on August 27, 1947. Her Mom accompanied her on the train. Unknown at the time, Sister Gladys Meindl, a postulant classmate-to-be, and *her* Mother were on the same train. This future connection was only discovered as they arrived at the Motherhouse.

As Marice "looks back from here," there were significant memories from her many years in ministry. Some memories were of difficult times; as was the case when she was sent mid-year to another mission because they couldn't find anyone else. Yet, many memories were positive and happy; such as the times she "won over" a student through perseverance and hard work. In fact, Marice counts that as one of her greatest joys!

In her elder years here at Assisi Heights, Marice follows a routine, greeting each day with a hopeful spirit. During the day, she frequently stops at the Chapel down the hall to check in with God, trusting that He will see her through whatever may come of the day. She likes to get outdoors when she can; and she enjoys visiting other Sisters, or having them visit her.

Coping with changes in her life, she prays for God's care, and she finds evidence of God's response in the on-going support and encouragement of her family and her classmates living here, especially Sister Louise Romero, whom she refers to as a daily "Guardian Angel."

Marice recalls some of the best advice was given by her brother, John."Say what you have to say; don't go on talking all the time." And in the years she spent working on Administration Corridor, she can still hear Kathy Gatliff teasingly greeting her with, "You're late!" Out of the corner of her eye, while still typing, Kathy noticed Marice mosey along. It was as if she was cheering Marice on the rest of the way down the hall to the Vocations office, where she served as assistant to Sister Ann Redig.

Late in our conversation, Marice said, "Aging is hard." It was a statement which put an "Amen" on whatever else she spoke of; simply because aging is front and center of daily well-being in her elder years. Certainly, aging is not easy, but Marice's gracious smile and charming chuckle reveal God's abundant help through any tough spots she has lived and is living!

What a testimony to your deep faith, Marice, and your desire to reach out to receive all the blessings God wants to offer you as you journey here among us. You're still a wonderful teacher, Marice! Thank you!

Responsive to Needs: Sister Colleen Waterman

interviewed by Sister Therese Jilk

The name Colleen means "girl", which sounds very generic and common. But Colleen's life story is anything but ordinary. Her life is filled with spirit and zest; not in the number of geographical places in which she lived and ministered to persons in need, but in the circumstances she encountered in those places, which called for Colleen's willingness to be there for whomever stood before her. This pattern of always being on-the-ready to help is visible throughout Colleen's life; whether it's about music or about helping to deepen the Spirit of God in persons desiring to know Jesus better.

This English, Irish, German lass was born Rockwell City, Iowa. Colleen Carole Moore had one brother, James Richard, who was 18 months older than she. Early on, her Dad was killed in a car accident just eleven days before her 3rd Birthday. Her dad and his partner were working with Remington Rand Typewriters. The car stalled and they got out of the car and unhooked the trailer to see if they could restart the car. Dad was killed on the spot by a car from behind, and his partner died the next day.

After this major life-changing trauma, Colleen, her brother Jim and their mother moved in with her maternal grandparents. This new arrangement was just fine with Colleen, who had dreamed of a large family, and now she was living with seven aunts and uncles. Colleen remembers being taken to the hospital to see her mother, who was being treated for shock, following the trauma. Her mother's embrace left her with fearful concerns and a fierce desire to protect and free her mother from pain.

Soon thereafter, Colleen's mom went to secretarial school in Des Moines, Iowa, to better equip herself to earn a living for the family. Colleen recalls that her Grandma Gidel always prepared extravagantly for big celebrations, like Christmas, but also for other holy days or holidays. Cooking for threshing crews in summer was another significant event, complete with a temporary set-up of a mirror and outdoor water for the guys to clean up outside before coming in to feast on the big meal. Mid-afternoon lunches were also part of harvesting time. Between seasons, folks got together, too. Adults would play cards, and kids enjoyed a lot of free play outside, depending on weather. Considering that there was no electricity, performing daily functions required much creativity. They had no indoor plumbing, either. Bathing, for instance, involved taking turns, one at a time, in a large tub of water heated from on the range.

When Colleen was 7 or 8, her Mom remarried. Her new stepfather was William Waterman. The family moved into an apartment in town when William went to serve in the military in WWII. From this new location, the kids walked to Catholic School where Colleen stayed through grade 8. In 5th grade, she started piano lessons, and continued through her high school years. "I paid my way by cleaning for the Sisters." She practiced piano after school, which meant her music teacher could hear any mistakes as she prayed her Office while walking outside. Colleen remembers how cold it was walking to school in the winter. She had to stay at home when she contracted pneumonia. Her cousin, who was a nurse, checked on her during the day. In fact, it was that nurse who encouraged her to become one!

The Mercy Sisters served in her Catholic School. They were not received well, and were thought to be too strict and too mean. Milwaukee Franciscan Sisters soon replaced the Mercy Sisters, and this changed Colleen's [and I imagine everyone else's] attitude at school. These Sisters were kind, and students began to really like school. The sacraments of First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation were all received in Catholic School.

As they graduated to public school, Colleen and Jim played the trombone, Jim was in football and Colleen in basketball, marching band, etc. It was also at this time that brother Craig was born, fifteen years after Colleen. Because Colleen cared for Craig after school, he became the virtual mascot of Colleen's basketball team; just by being there at the games. (Year's later, Craig's death while serving in the military in Vietnam, was particularly difficult for Colleen because of that special bond created when Craig was the little mascot.)

By this time, WWII was over, and there was still need for some foods to be rationed. "Bananas and tapioca were what I missed," said Colleen. Another rationing memory was the margarine in plastic bags that had to be colored by popping the little bubble of color and then dispersing the color in the whole bag by squeezing it till the whole bag was yellow-orange instead of white-looking like real butter! Her stepfather was wounded in service; and came home when WWII was over. Returning from the service, Colleen's Mother and stepfather started Waterman's Restaurant, located in the square of their town, Rockwell City, Iowa. After school, Colleen worked in the restaurant and ran it the summer before her senior year of high school. Then her stepfather got a job with US Mail service. (After his time in military service, he suffered from alcoholism, which of course affected each member of the family.)

After high school, it was on to St. Marys Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota, for a three-year nursing program. Colleen's sister Michelle was born during that time, and she took time to care of Michelle and their mother in the first few months.

After nurses training, God was calling Colleen to religious life. From there, it was to the convent of the Rochester Franciscan Sisters, to which Colleen had aspired since the 8th grade. When she came to Assisi Heights, her main contacts were her classmates: Sisters Lucretia, Marcelline, Josette, Annella and Leander. Following her first vows, Colleen was assigned to St. Marys Hospital; thus she was becoming acquainted with all nursing departments. Then, Colleen was assigned to the Post-Operative Cardiac Surgical floor. After a couple of years, she was sent to Marquette University College of Nursing to obtain a bachelor's degree in nursing. It was there that she received her Public Health Nursing experience in the inner city of Milwaukee. She was really drawn to that kind of nursing. However, upon returning to Rochester, she was assigned to night supervision at St. Marys Hospital.

When Sister Maigread requested a nurse come to work with her, Mother Callista asked Colleen if she would go - and she agreed. At that time, Sister Magread had already been responding to the Bishop's request that we Franciscans work with the poor in the Charleston area.

Years later, losing Maigread to death was probably the greatest life-changing experience for Colleen. When Maigread first got ill, Colleen took care of her until she needed to get back to Rochester. Mayo Clinic Air Ambulance flew them into Rochester on August 27, 1999, and Maigread died on November 10. Returning to Charleston after Maigread's loss meant Colleen needed to take on the responsibility of their work together. That she did, no doubt becoming aware of others who

would help take up the slack of all that needed to go on; those who had learned by being cared for by the Sisters through the programs which were now well established. But of course, nothing would be the same without the presence of the first Sister to come there. [A previous issue of *Interchange* included a story about Colleen's time in Charleston.]

Colleen retired to Assisi Heights in 2010. At that time, she was recuperating from surgery for spinal stenosis. For 20 months of that "retirement." Colleen lived at Madonna Towers to care for her mother, who was not doing well. Nor was Colleen's sister Michelle. Michelle died, then her mom also died.

As I listen to Colleen talking about it now, 10 years later, her energy around the ministries she loved still are alive and well. She is still in contact with folks in Charleston by phone, and of course as the years go by, many of them have now gone to God. Colleen also remembers fondly the experience of a 31-day Study Pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy, with Sister Maigread; "it was life-changing..." After the pilgrimage, they responded to the destruction of Hurricane Hugo on September 21, 1989. That, too,was surely "life changing" for so many. The Sisters were asked to supervise a shelter set up in one of the schools. At Neighborhood House, they worked with those trucking in supplies for persons in need after the hurricane. The three Sisters, Colleen, Maigread and Laureen, were surprised that trucks kept bringing in supplies (water, potato chips, canned goods, clothing and diapers, you name it) that they hadn't ordered but received through the thoughtful generosity of others! They began distributing the goodies from the empty Rectory next door, right off the porch.

It seems to me that the heart of Colleen's lifelong love was, and still is, song. She taught guitar lessons to a many children after practically teaching herself to play! She led her 30-member Chorus and Combo which provided liturgical music on Sundays at Mass, and for an ordination. This group also appeared on "Black Showcase for African Talent" on TV. In the AIDS ministry, Colleen journeyed with folks feeling rejected, dying at home or in the hospital. In prison ministry, Colleen worked with others to offer a program to prisoners called KAIROS, which was a three-day retreat-like experience with spiritual direction and group presentations. Colleen's work in Charleston also resulted in adding diversity to the student body at the College of Saint Teresa (CST) in Winona, as black students from Charleston were invited to study at CST, during the time when Sister Joyce Rowland was CST President.

Your life path was crossed by and joined by many persons, Colleen, and your ministry engaged many current needs of the times in which you lived. Whether through church, or building communities within church, school, hospital or government public health services, life for you was being there for others, wanting to share the heartbeat of the Good News: God says, "Love others as I have loved you; become love yourself." Amen. Alleluia!

Copyright © 2020. All Rights Reserved.