

Q. You seem to be very knowledgeable about your family's heritage. Can you share some of that history?

A. My family is of strong Irish Catholic faith and heritage. My ties to Joliet, Ill., are strong, too. For more than five generations, my ancestors lived and worked in the area. Our extended family always has been close and continues to share good times in one another's company. This important connection gave me great feelings of love, support and security. Among my relatives, many of the women on both sides have been teachers. We also have priests and women religious throughout the generations. Even among the youngest, teaching is still a choice in more than one family.

Q. Why did you choose to be a Sister of Providence, or enter religious life?

A. I felt called to religious life. I really felt a call. And, I really resisted it. I prayed for my last two years of high school that I did not have a vocation to religious life. Being a teacher was always what was in my plans, but not as a religious. I dated, attended parties, proms and other social events. In the end, my conscience encouraged me to answer that demanding call. Whether or not this realization was a turning point, I just knew my response had to be yes.

Q. How did that make you feel?

A. I think I would have felt very guilty if I didn't go along with it. I had to build up the determination to leave my family. At that time, we could only go home again when our mother or father was dying. This regulation changed through the years, but it was a big decision to make at 18.

Q. What was the turning point?

A. I don't know if I could really name a turning point. It was just something I felt I had to do when I finally felt sure. If I would have waited, I would have talked myself out of it. I was good at rationalization.

Q. Why did you choose the Sisters of Providence?

A. Although two of my Providence High School classmates were entering the local Sisters of St. Francis, I chose the Sisters of Providence. These sisters had been my teachers in elementary and high school. I felt comfortable with them and admired them. I wanted to emulate Sister Rose Scecina, my first-grade teacher, as a teacher and religious. A good friend and high school mentor, Sister Lois Ann Stoiber, was currently in the Congregation's novitiate. I visited her at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and liked what I saw. With support from my father and some resistance from my mother, my choice was the Sisters of Providence.

Q. What do you value most about your ministry opportunities?

A. Whatever has been accomplished in my ministries is the result of trust in Providence, prayer and input from our sisters. No one of us could really accomplish alone what all of us together can do. I personally need community for this purpose. I need to know that others believe in what I do and support me. I believe I would have been a good person if I were not in the convent, but I am a better person because of the love and support given me here. Two ministry opportunities that are good examples come to mind. The first is the merger of the two Catholic elementary schools in Galesburg, Ill. I was asked to return there after assignments elsewhere for six years. My direction was to bring about this merger. Without the input, very hard work and support of the sisters from both schools this would not have been possible. I cannot emphasize that enough. The leaders of the lay Catholics quickly caught the sisters' enthusiasm and accomplished this challenge to create Costa Catholic School. Another example, the need became evident for quality day care for the children of employees on both sides of the campus at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. When the Montessori School at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College closed, the opportunity to use that area enabled this day care idea to become reality. Sister Barbara Doherty, then the college's president, was very open to this plan. The college provided the space and the Congregation assumed sponsorship of the corporation. Many of our retired sisters have given time and experience to the success of this enterprise. I felt fortunate to be in a position to help enable this venture.

Q. Sister Joyce is ...

A. Happy to be a Sister of Providence. I feel that I have been an enabling person and loyal in my life situations.

Q. What role does prayer have in your life?

A. I like praying with others as well as having time for my own private prayer. I cannot imagine life without prayer. I have special devotions that I pray privately each day. I feel called to group prayer. I do that each evening in a small group. I look forward to being with them.

Q. How important is a community lifestyle to you?

A. Living in large community groups or in small ones have been wonderful experiences, but that is because of the sisters who were with me. The times have not always been perfect, but that is normal. I learned so much from others with whom I lived and prayed and worked. Lessons that impacted both my prayer and professional life were there to emulate and to guide all through the years. It is different now from the early lifestyle of many Sisters of Providence. I have lived in houses of 26, 18 and 16 or 17. Our schedule was very ordered and organized. Early in community, I lived with two other sisters in a small house. I think that was the first time in Community I had the occasion to live much the way a nuclear family would. We needed to depend upon one another with a very

loving concern. This was a different concept of community for me, a learning and rewarding one

Q. Has your life turned out as you might have imagined?

A. Some of the positions to which I have been assigned have been quite challenging. However, in these assignments, I have felt affirmation and trust. I've had love and I've had companionship. Being with other people who believe in the values and hopes I have is important to me. My relationship with God is of primary importance and I make more determined efforts to grow in this relationship through prayer and study.

Q. What is the most important thing in your life right now?

A.. I don't have a concern for our Congregation because I think through Saint Mother Theodore Guerin and God whatever is best for the Congregation will come to be. I really and truly believe that, whether we increase the numbers or decrease in existence. I think people are going to have faith challenges, material challenges, economic challenges, world problems.

Q. Of all things you learned from your parents, what was most valuable?

A. Particularly from my father, everyone is deserving of respect. My mother taught us to be aware of others and to share.

Q. Do you have a particular philosophy you could share?

A. In the 20s, WOW!, life is ahead of you and you think you can do or be most anything. In the 30s, one is kind of busy. You haven't proven yourself as yet; really have to work to get there. In the 40s, one starts to think maybe I won't make it to where thought I would be, a frustrating time. In the 50s, one begins to think that even though I did not do everything I planned, I'm not bad either. One starts to like one's self. The 50s are nifty! The 60s, 70s and 80s one feels OK, not perfect, but OK. One can live with one's self in a better fashion and is happier with the person one has become. That is how it seems to me.

Q. What has given you your most pleasure or satisfaction?

A. Probably being with family and friends, and when I say friends, I am talking about friends in community and other friends too. I had two girl friends, one of whom was my cousin. We were called us "the inseparables" in school! We went to grade school and high school together. They both married. I knew their husbands from school days because they were in the same crowd we were in. When we get together it is as if there have never been years of separation. We still carry on a whole conversation with a look.

Q. What gives you hope?

A. We strongly believe in the Providence of God and all that this implies. We, as a Congregation, are not afraid of learning more and taking on a new challenge. We are open to new things. We remain very faithful to our commitment and to one another.

Q. When do you feel most energized?

A. Times when our Congregation comes together for a meeting or some kind of celebration. We have something special! It is a good feeling of who we are when we are together.

Q. Do you have any particular crafts, hobbies or interests?

A. Reading historical novels and/or mysteries is a favorite. I have always loved to sew and embroider.

Q. If you could perform a miracle, what would you do?

A. I see so many blessings happen all the time. These are my mini-miracles. I might be feeling sorry for myself and walking along the hall and some dear soul walks up and says, "So nice to see you," and gives you a hug. These things happen all the time.

Q. What would you be doing differently if you knew Jesus would be coming later today?

A. I want to say I would be doing what I had planned to do anyway. I don't think Jesus would want me to be doing anything different.

Q. When you think of God, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

A. God must be a lot like my dad. Dad loved us unconditionally. When we were little I thought my dad could do anything and everything. I know he loved us right or wrong, not that he accepted wrongs, but he loved you. He is usually my first image of God.

Q. What energizes you spiritually?

A. Sharing the Eucharist is important to me. A little practice I learned years ago is to be aware of others approaching for Holy Communion and thanking Jesus for His presence in each as they approach the table. No longer is it just "Jesus and me," but "Jesus and us" who are sharing. It is just a private practice of my own, but something that means much to me.

Quick thoughts:

What do you like best about Saint Mary-of-the-Woods? It is home.

When I am not officially at work or involved in ministry ... Reading. I'd rather read than watch television.

On weekends I like to ... Same thing.

I am passionate about ... The word passion is overused. I don't think in those terms.

What the world needs now ... What we profess in peace, justice, mercy and love.

Name one thing most people don't know about you. They know I am a chocoholic, so that wouldn't work.

What do you miss most about being a kid? When I don't feel well, I always wish my mother were around. She was always so loving in taking care of us.

What would you like to hear God say when you get to Heaven? Welcome home.

What is your biggest pet peeve? I have a big thing about being on time, for myself and for others.

What is highlight of your week? It used to be Friday, but that doesn't make much difference now.

Favorites

Flower/plant: Zinnia

Movie: It's a Wonderful Life

Vacation spot: Northern Highlands in Wisconsin

Recreation: Reading

Animal: Dogs

Pizza topping: Pepperoni and mushrooms

Holiday: Christmas

Author: James Michener

Prayer: Breastplate of St. Patrick

Dessert: Anything chocolate

Time of day: Mid-morning

Season: Autumn

Actor/actress: Meryl Streep

Comic strip: For Better or Worse

Childhood activity: Riding my bicycle

Hero/heroine: George Rogers Clark

Course in School: Social studies

Saint: Mother Theodore Guerin

Least favorite food: Chicken wings

Least favorite course in school: Penmanship

My best friend says I'm ... loyal and caring

If I weren't an SP, I'd (still) be ... an educator

Other

Sister Joyce Brophy

Current ministry: Congregational outreach ministries

Years in Congregation: 63

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