

Q. Why did you choose to become a Sister of Providence?

A. Whenever I look back and remember how it was that I knew that I wanted to be a Sister of Providence, I am in awe of the mystery of it all. Knowing in my heart what I was being called to was so strong an experience that I had no reservations about my decision. I was a junior in high school and I was in our parish church one Saturday afternoon. I remember being peaceful kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament. All that I can recall now is that when I left the church, I knew that I was meant to enter the Sisters of Providence. I couldn't explain why, but I experienced such deep peace and joy when I said "yes" during that quiet visit.

Q. What was it like to make that decision?

A. I loved the Ursuline sisters who taught me in grade school and I had good relations with several Dominican sisters and Sisters of the Holy Cross who taught me in high school. My Aunt Margaret was a Sister of Providence. We visited her when she taught at Marywood School in Evanston, Illinois. Several times we would make the long, hot ride in the summer to see her at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Can you picture nine or 10 children with mother and father in a station wagon with no air conditioning, driving from Oak Park, Illinois, to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in July? That speaks of the true devotion of my parents to my aunt for sure. And for me, it was God's way of introducing me to my soon-to-be home away from home.

Q. Why would a woman today find being a Sister of Providence an attractive choice or lifestyle option?

A. There is such a wonderful variety of gifts among us that we respect and value. A woman who wishes to serve in relationship with others would experience a supportive environment in which she could discover her own gifts and choose to consecrate herself to God as a Sister of Providence. We seek an ever-growing awareness of the presence of God's Providence in all of life. The opportunity to belong with those who share a common spirit and strive to be a source of hope and strength for others animates me, animates us.

Q. What message would you share with women in discernment?

A. I hope that each of you in discernment has the opportunity to be with a Sister of Providence as she lives her call to serve and become who she is meant to be. The spirit of the vocation of each of us is often caught intuitively.

Q. What role does prayer have in your life?

A. Prayer fulfills my longing to be in communion with God, the source of love and hope. Prayer connects me with all who share the glory of God. I have a variety of ways of praying that I have learned over time. Centering prayer, meditative reading, the morning and evening prayer of the Church, celebrating the Eucharist with co-workers, catechists and families, becoming conscious of the message of Jesus in what I have lived through evocation, all is part of my being in God, in creation, in the community of faith as a Sister of Providence.

Q. How much influence does Saint Mother Theodore Guerin have in your life? How do you live out her legacy today?

A. I'm grateful for the books that have been written about Mother Theodore's life. I can relate well with the challenge she faced to provide for those in need. I had an overwhelming experience of her presence when Sister Diane Ris brought a relic of Mother Theodore to my place of ministry, the SPRED Center. We met to pray together, our hands encompassing the relic. Since that experience I have a very real and sacred sense of her presence with me. Her picture reminds me of her trust in Providence and strengthens me.

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

A. I have two most important things. SPRED ministry continues to grow through the hard work of many. We are working to reproduce ourselves so that responsibilities can be shared by others and the work can continue beyond our presence. It is important that those with special needs find a place of belonging in the liturgical life of the Church. We trust that there will be sufficient laborers in the field to continue what God has allowed us to establish over a period of 50 years. I am a caregiver for my sister, Rita, who is a person with Down Syndrome. My brothers and sisters assist me with her care. Her health needs are increasing. She is well supported by our wonderful SPRED team. It is important to me that she will always experience joy in belonging.

Q. What energizes you spiritually?

A. Good liturgy. On the first Sunday of every month, we welcome families with persons with disabilities and catechists from throughout the Archdiocese to the SPRED Chapel. We model for others the way that persons with disabilities can participate meaningfully in liturgy. The sense of Church is magnificent. Also, when we celebrate jubilees and vows at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, the church is full of a grand variety of people. All participate wholeheartedly as one body. I am energized as a member of the believing community, as one with vows, a Sister of Providence. It's a wonderful experience of renewal.

Q. What gives you hope?

A. We are always recruiting volunteers to form small adult communities of faith to welcome persons with disabilities. There are wonderful people in parishes who are willing to share their faith and witness God's love. This gives me hope. Persons volunteering thinking of the giving they will do. They discover the gift that persons with special needs have to share with them. When we discover the presence of God together and sing praise, I have hope.

Q. I am passionate about ...

A. Developing small communities of faith in parishes where those who are marginalized as a population in society can find a place of belonging and become prepared to participate in liturgy in the parish assembly of believers. All need to be welcomed.

Quick connections

Q. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of God?

A. God is Love. God is my caregiver.

Q. What do you like best about Saint Mary-of-the-Woods?

A. The peace I experience in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, the cemetery, walking amidst the beautiful trees, the love I experience with sisters.

Q. When I am not officially at work or involved in ministry, you're most likely to see me ...

A. Engaged in some quieting experience that restores balance: in the flower garden, listening to music, walking, listening to birds, enjoying a meal with friends.

Favorites

Flower: Roses. There are so many varieties and colors and they continue to bloom, month after month, even the Midwest.

Book: I have enjoyed Thomas Merton's books for many years. Right now, I am engrossed in *The Resurrection* by F.X. Durrwell. I hope to read more of his books. He has a powerful manner of helping me to sense the mystery anew.

Movie: I just enjoyed a film distributed by PBS that's a real gem: William Segal, *Seeing, Searching, Being*. Also, three films by Ken Burns. Segal searched relentlessly and compassionately for meaning in the 20th Century. The "Who am I" search and "How am I connected with all that is" is a lifetime challenge.

Vacation spot: A place out of the city with expansive sky, the lake and the woods nearby.

Recreation: Sharing a meal with friends.

Hobby: Taking photographs, working with clay.

Sport: Baseball, go Chicago White Sox!

Music: I enjoy the work of Michael Hoppe and Joshua Bell.

Holiday: Easter.

Scripture: The first epistle of John, 1st chapter: What we have seen and heard we proclaim in turn to you so that you may share life with us.

Time of day: Early morning.

Season: Spring.

Heroine: My mother.

Saint: The Communion of Saints among whom are my family members, Mother Theodore and many SPs, SPRED friends catechists.

My best friend says I'm ... Recently, my sister, Rita, told me, "You are kind, considerate, spontaneous and I'll love you forever." She keeps me real and helps me to aim toward the reality of her kind words.

Other

Current ministry: Assistant director, SPRED Agency, Archdiocese of Chicago.

Years in Congregation: XX

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