

January 2018

Dear Friends,

We began last month's issue of *Women of Hope* (December 2017) by looking at the word "vocation." Remembering that vocation means "to call," we each discern our call in different ways. Some of us feel called to marriage, some to the single life, and some feel drawn to religious life. Discovering the plan that God has for each of us takes time, and can be revealed to us in a variety of ways as we gradually discover the vocation to which we are being called.

Sister Joyce Wagner's vocation began at an early age when she would accompany her mother to St. Priscilla's Church in Chicago for services. She was intrigued by the sisters she met there, and later on this curiosity would be nurtured by the School Sisters of St. Francis when she attended Alvernia High School. Today, Sister Joyce is grateful for her call to religious life, a call that began many years ago, and continues today in joyful service.

Thank you, Sister Joyce!

Sister Beth Ann Baricevich, OSF
Vocation Minister

Women of Hope is the monthly electronic newsletter from the Membership and Relationship Team of the School Sisters of St. Francis for single Catholic women interested in exploring God's call in their lives. To learn more, please contact Sister Beth Ann Baricevich: babaricevich@sssf.org or 414-550-0321.

Sharing Values and Friendship

By Sister Ruth Hoerig

Sister Joyce Wagner grew up with three sisters and one brother in metropolitan Chicago. She developed a strong faith life thanks to her parents' influence, and recalls how she would attend services at St. Priscilla Church with her mother. Her memories of the "Tre Ore" services on Good Friday from 12:00-3:00 p.m. are especially vivid.

"My mother would sometimes bring baked treats to the Rochester Franciscan sisters who taught at St. Priscilla School," Sister Joyce recalled. "I loved to stay late after school to help the sisters. I was curious about their life and wanted to know what 'made them tick'."

Her first contact with the School Sisters of St. Francis came when she attended Alvernia High School. "I was instantly attracted to their simplicity and their congenial, friendly manner," she said. "So, after graduating from high school, I wasted no time preparing to enter the School Sisters of St. Francis. Though I originally wanted to be a physical education teacher, that option wasn't available to me at Alverno College, so I majored in elementary education."

Sister Joyce served all 44 years of her career as an educator in Wisconsin, starting in the 1960s in Waupun. Her favorite schools were Our Lady of Sorrows in Milwaukee, where she taught in the 1980s, and St. Rita in West Allis, where she served as principal from 1991 to 2004.

"Following that, I began a new ministry serving in the Finance Office for our congregation's U.S. Province, where I served for 13 years," she said.

"I feel very blessed to be a religious sister today because of the presence of so many sisters who are content and happy with the years we've shared in community, the values we share in common, and the concern each one has for one another," Sister Joyce said. "One Sunday, when my mother was visiting, she observed our family spirit and noticed how eagerly the sisters share with one another. She commented to me, 'You really made a good choice here.'"

Sister Joyce concurs. "I would encourage anyone who may be considering religious life today to discern this lifestyle very carefully. Anyone who shares our values, wants to be of service to others, and is interested in sharing life with a community of educated and deeply spiritual women should take the time to pause and consider this choice very prayerfully."

As she reflected on her life, Sister Joyce expressed deep gratitude for how gently God has cared for her through the years. Throughout her life, she had a favorite mantra that helped her through the hard times: "Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble. Be with me Lord, I pray."

You are welcome to join us for liturgies, concerts, workshops and other events at St. Joseph Center. For a complete listing, please visit our website: www.sssf.org or find us on Facebook.

