

1958, professing my first vows in 1960 and final vows in 1965. I was eager to be a sister like my aunt.

I started school almost immediately upon entering, focusing on education for a ministry in teaching. After about 12 years, I went back to school in Great Falls, Mont., to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. Nursing was the ministry that gave me the most life, especially at Columbus Hospital in Great Falls.

I also served as local superior, and coordinator of our sisters living at Emilie Court, an assisted living center in Spokane. We gather each evening for prayer and meet to complete tasks required by the Province at large. Even though we cannot actively go out to assist the poor, each one says that she can pray. This takes a lot of faith as all were used to being actively involved in teaching, pastoral care and other ministries.

Each sister does the best she can with the energy she has. I still find my ministry very enriching, and anything I can do to make their days easier I will try to do. In many ways, like in my nursing ministry, I'm still helping make people comfortable.

Reaching this milestone as a sister leaves me feeling grateful. I have done the best I could all these years, and I thank God for my good health.

### **Judith George, SP**

*(Sister Mary Angela)*

I grew up in Missoula, Montana, the oldest of seven living children. We were a close-knit, Catholic family, all of us educated in Catholic schools.

Right out of high school I entered the Sisters of Providence which I had become familiar with at St. Patrick Hospital, in St. Francis Xavier grade school and at Sacred Heart Academy, Missoula.

I made my first vows in the chapel of Mount St. Vincent, Seattle. My religious life formation took place in Seattle and Issaquah, with wonderful courses in theology, social sciences, liberal arts and French.

I started teaching high school French in Walla Walla. The next year I went to Paris to continue my studies and eventually received my master's degree in French. This opened the door to my favorite ministry — teaching college-level French in Great Falls, Mont.



While much of my ministry was devoted to teaching, it also included formation ministry with new members, serving in leadership, and participating in retreat and

spiritual direction ministries. My current ministry is in the religious community library in Spokane.

The last 10 years have been filled with many blessings. Two years ago I moved into Providence Emilie Court Assisted Living, Spokane, but I still carry out my ministries in the Mount St. Joseph building attached to Emilie Court.

I am most grateful for my family, which has become wonderfully extended throughout these years and has been most supportive of me. I'm grateful, as well, for my religious family, the mainstay of my life consecrated to God, and the time and space to pray for our world, near and far, to be available to others as needed, to continue learning and growing.

## **70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee**

### **Helen Brennan, SP**

*(Sister Dympna)*

My journey with the Sisters of Providence began in 1936, when Sister Beatrice Ann came to our parish in Camas, Wash., to teach Sunday catechism. Religion was already an important part of my Irish home, and justice was another. Both stayed central in my life.

In the eighth grade, I enrolled in Providence Academy, Vancouver, Wash. Sister Mary Claver was the first to ask me if I had thought about entering religious life. Like my parents, she was deeply concerned about social justice and became a strong influence.

After making my first profession in 1951 as Sister Dympna, I taught grade school in Seattle, Yakima and Vancouver, Wash. and in Sun Valley,



Calif. I then went to Fairbanks, Alaska, which was truly a blessing. I had more freedom than other places I had taught, allowing time to become part of the community and get to know families.

In 1968, I became director of religious education at St. Catherine's, Seattle, which was my career for the next 23 years. The 1970s were particularly memorable, as I was privileged to return to Alaska to minister.

As I reflect on other life blessings, I count the time with my blood sister (formerly a Sister of Providence) at the end of her life among them.

Since retiring in 1996, I have had more time to ponder and pray and share with others. I remain active in St. Patrick Parish, the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, an ecumenical Habitat for Humanity group, and Call to Action Western Washington. I encourage the sisters and others to become educated about the changes needed in the church and in society, especially inclusivity and empowering women.

### **Susan Fitzmorris, SP**

*(Sister Clare of Assisi)*

Sister Susan Fitzmorris was born in Olympia, Wash., into a family of 10. She was taught by the Sisters of Providence at St. Michael's School and entered the novitiate at Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, in 1948. She professed first vows in 1950.

For 23 years, Sister Susan taught a range of grades and subjects in Seattle, Walla Walla, Vancouver and Moxee, Wash.; Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska; and at St. Finbar's and Providence High School in Burbank, Calif. Summers at the College of Great Falls while living at St. Thomas Home led to a bachelor of science degree in education.

"There was something about every place that I taught that I enjoyed," she recalls, but her time in Fairbanks stood out. The Sisters of Providence there, teachers and nurses, formed a large community that shared fun and trips together.





## Sister (Ruth) Virginia Miller

Sister (Ruth) Virginia Miller was born in Longview, Wash., the youngest of three girls. When she was in the seventh grade her older sister entered the Sisters of Providence. Throughout high school, Ruth would often visit her. So, it was no wonder she entered the community on July 17, 1948.

Sister Virginia's ministry initially focused on elementary education, including St. Patrick's School, Walla Walla, Wash.; Holy Rosary School, Moxee; St. Joseph Grade School and St. Joseph Academy, Yakima; and Providence Academy, Vancouver, Wash.

In 1967, Sister Elizabeth Joyce joined her and they began the Vancouver Apostolate, a program training lay volunteers in a variety of ministries. They expanded this ministry to Snohomish, Monroe and Poulsbo. In 1978, they were asked to become the first Rural Ministry Team in the Archdiocese of Seattle, offering training to volunteers in many of the rural parishes in the Archdiocese. For eight years they served in 12 parishes and 10 mission churches.

In 1995, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen appointed Sister Virginia as pastoral life director of Holy Family, Frances and St. Joseph Pe Ell Parishes, as well as a team member for St. Mary Parish, Seaview, Wash.; and St. Lawrence Parish, Raymond, Wash.

The next 11 years were the most rewarding for her. Each weekend she presided at one of the four parishes she served.

Reflecting on her 70 years as a Sister of Providence, Sister Virginia expresses nothing but gratitude. "My religious community, the wonderful

people I have met and worked with, the education I have received, the beautiful part of the world that I live in... I can only say, Providence of God, I thank You for all."



## 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

### Dorothy Byrne, SP (Sister Dolores)

Sister Dorothy Byrne grew up in the tiny oil town of Kevin, Mont., with a brother, retired Father Joseph Byrne of the Diocese of Helena.

After graduating from Ursuline Academy, Great Falls, Mont., Dorothy spent one year at the College of Great Falls before World War II broke out. Her cousin encouraged her to apply for a job at Boeing where they were hiring many women during the war, so she left for Seattle.

While she wasn't initially planning to be a sister, Father Charles Suver, SJ, encouraged her to think about it. He led her through a discernment process, after which she said yes to God and becoming a Sister of Providence.

Sister Dorothy made first profession in 1945 and later earned a teaching certificate at the College of Great Falls. For 25 years she served as a teacher and principal in junior high and high schools in Montana and Washington.

She earned a master's degree in history at Gonzaga University and later a master's in adult religious

education at Seattle University. For six years she was a consultant to the Diocese of Spokane. After two years as pastoral associate



at Assumption Parish, Spokane, she spent 18 years serving Sacred Heart Parish, and has remained a part of that family. Sister Dorothy also served on the provincial council of the former St. Ignatius Province and on the board of Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane, for 15 years.

Today, Sister Dorothy enjoys daily walks, Gonzaga basketball, and her ministry of prayer and presence, despite macular degeneration that has made her legally blind.

"I am full of gratitude and love. My desire is simply 'to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.' My life has been one of joy. Providence of God, I thank You for all." ●

## 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee

### Susan Fitzmorris, SP...

(Sister Clare of Assisi)

When Sister Susan left teaching in 1974, she began working with elderly sisters at St. Joseph Residence, Seattle, and discovered she loved that role just as much. During the next 20 years, she moved from assistant superior to team member/assistant coordinator, then to housekeeper at nearby Mount St. Vincent and later as supervisor of housekeeping and laundry.

One of her delights while at The Mount was working in the training program for physically and mentally challenged young people. She was thrilled to see them learn new skills and apply them in housekeeping, laundry and maintenance jobs.

After her retirement in 1994, Sister Susan volunteered at the Emilie Shop at The Mount for many years. She also managed the storeroom for used furniture at Caritas Court. Now at St. Joseph Residence, Sister Susan enjoys reading and cheering for the Mariners on television.



# A visit to the Providence Associate communities

## in the Philippines

By Kathe Boucha, PA, Executive Director, Providence Associates of Mother Joseph



▲ Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Manila



▲ WWII war memorial, Bataan



◀ 2019, the year of the pig

**I** accepted with gratitude the invitation to visit the Providence Associates (PAs) and Sisters of Providence who live and serve their parishes, neighbors and fellow citizens, unconditionally, in the Philippines. Also, it was an opportunity to leave the cold winter of Alaska and enjoy the sun and warm breezes of the South Pacific.

Sister Jo Ann Showalter and I flew together from Seattle to Manila and were greeted by Sisters Josie Ramac, Lucy Vasquez, Beth Rayray and Julie Macasieb. We were welcomed into their lovely home and shared delicious meals of local foods from the markets in Quezon City. The fresh fruits were a delight and a delicacy for one from Alaska. The sisters were gracious hostesses, skilled chefs and knowledgeable tour guides. They shared the customs and history of the Philippine people as well as their faith.

We had the unique opportunity to visit a huge mall in Manila and, much to my surprise, there was a large Catholic church on the top floor. They called it a chapel, but it was larger than any church in Alaska. Most of the workers and shoppers in the mall are devoted Catholics and attend Mass daily.

12, in Dagupan City in the province of Pangasinan. We told stories about Associate life in North America and they shared their experiences, challenges and dreams.

The next day we traveled to Balanga City in the province of Bataan, where we visited a women's prison. We delivered many gifts including a new sewing machine, supplies to make Seven Dolor Rosaries for the female prisoners to sell, and personal hygiene supplies. The gifts were sent from the PAs in Holy Angels Province, Edmonton, Canada. The visit to the prison was humbling and filled me with compassion for the incarcerated women living in unacceptable conditions — and gratitude for my blessed life in the U.S.

While in the province of Bataan, we visited the famous WWII memorial and reviewed the history of the American troops' experiences and tragedies during the war. My father and a relative of Sr. Jo Ann Showalter served and fought there during the 1940s. It was another informative and humbling adventure. I learned the other side of the story of the war through pictures and memorabilia.

We had a delightful experience that we called a "laughing lunch," which I think was a healthy release of emotions from the experiences at the women's prison, the war memorial and war museum.

We met with the Associates in Balanga, a group of lovely and

dedicated young women: Angel, who hosted a lunch for us in her home, plus Linda and Lizzy. They expressed interest in what Associates in other countries are doing to serve their communities and in coming to the U.S. and to Montreal to visit and learn. We spent time in prayer and reflection with each group of Associates and the feeling of community was very strong, even with the cultural differences. We discussed the possibility of meeting by Skype or other video conferencing services in the future to keep the sense of a global community alive.

Sister Lucy Vasquez connected us with Rev. Fr. Gerald T. Borja, CM, and Rev. Fr. Rowen Carlos, CM, RSW, who oversee the Vincentian Foundation in Quezon City. They have programs to improve the welfare of the citizens of many provinces. We discussed their interest in developing more support for individuals who are lesser abled and the families and caregivers who care for them. I shared information about two successful programs in Alaska: Hope Community Services and the ARC of Anchorage. The CEOs of both organizations in Anchorage are interested in forming a partnership with the priests and Sisters of Providence in Metro Manila to assist in the development of new programs in the Philippines. The Anchorage organizations have invited the priests and the sisters to come to Anchorage in 2020 to explore this further.

The world seems smaller when we develop new friendships and build community with the Associates in other countries. I have a renewed sense of hope and commitment to the Providence Associates from experiencing the strong faith, love and unconditional commitment of the Associates globally. We in the U.S. have so much to learn from our fellow Associates wherever they may be. ●



▲ Catholic church in the shopping mall, Manila

# Q&A with Sister Rosa Nguyen

◀ Sister Rosa Nguyen, in a traditional habit of the Sisters of Providence, surrounded by students from Providence High School, Burbank, Calif.



◀ Sister Rosa Nguyen (right), in contemporary attire, with (left to right) Sisters Teresa White, Marilyn Charette and Lucille Dean.



**A**ny given day, you will find Sister Rosa Nguyen in the finance department or campus ministry at Providence High School (PHS) in Burbank, Calif. She has been at PHS for more than four years,

but she is the only remaining Sister of Providence working there today, carrying on a legacy the sisters began when they founded PHS in 1955.

Sister Rosa grew up in a devout Catholic family in Vietnam, the youngest of five sisters and three brothers. Even as a young girl she wished to be a religious sister, inspired by women in her parish and an aunt who was a sister. Rosa got her wish when she joined the Sisters of Providence in 2009 and professed final vows Feb. 10, 2018.

Here Sister Rosa responds to questions about religious life — excerpts from an article originally published in the PHS Pioneer Connections magazine, Fall 2018/Winter 2019 edition (read the full story at <https://tinyurl.com/SisterRosaNguyen>).

**You felt the call to become a sister when you were in high school. What made you decide that might be the path for your life?**

Right after finishing high school, I felt a strong call to religious life. I felt my world view shift. I wanted to do something meaningful with my life. I took time to pray and meditate on God's invitation to be a religious sister.

The more I discerned, the more I recognized that I was most fully myself when I was in tune with God. I believed I was meant to live

the lifestyle of a religious sister. For others, they may hear a call to married life, being a parent, becoming ordained or choosing the single life. Whatever lifestyle God calls us to is IT, the best one for us. I realized that to be true to myself it meant that I had to let go of something and let God do the driving. I am in the back seat. I am able to say, "Not my will, but Yours be done." I see religious life not as a choice anybody can make on their own; it is a response to God's choice.

**What about the Sisters of Providence appealed to you the most, above other religious orders?**

First, I chose the Sisters of Providence because my preference is to be more active. The Sisters of Providence are an apostolic community, which means we practice loving God by serving others directly. In contemplative orders, they have communal prayer in the chapel several times a day, work in the garden or make altar bread to practice loving God by loving one another. This is very good work and a special call. However, personally, I know that being a Sister of Providence I can be me and serve God and the world.

Second, I chose to be a Sister of Providence because of the mission. The mission calls each member to proclaim the mysteries of Providence

by our compassionate love and creative, prophetic solidarity with the poor. After living with the Sisters of Providence for 13 years, the mission of Providence has gotten into my veins, and it flows constantly through my daily actions.

Third, I chose to enter the Sisters of Providence because I love the community life. The strength in my vocation comes from living in community with the sisters who have made the same life commitment. Our communal life is about sharing, about giving of self, about praying and working together, and about supporting one another.

**Currently, you are the only Sister of Providence who works at Providence High School. What does it mean to you to carry on this legacy?**

Doing ministry at Providence High School is a gift and a blessing each day for me. Although I am the only Sister of Providence in this mission, I am not doing it alone because I have more than one hundred Sisters of Providence with me in spirit.

As a member of the Sisters of Providence, when we are sent on mission; as one sister or as 10 sisters, we do it on behalf of the congregation. We serve with all our hearts. I believe each staff and faculty member working at PHS has a call — a call to work together to bring the heritage and mission of the Providence legacy alive. I continue to say, "Here am I Lord; I come to do your will," and "Providence of God, I thank you for all." ●

