

Caritas

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Sister Joan has been Vocation Director for nine years.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Sister Joan Gallagher passes the baton to

A New Vocation Team



Members of the new Vocation Team are (from left) Sisters Clare Lentz, Jessica Taylor, Jacqueline Fernandes, coordinator; Maria Lourdes Cleto and Mary Hawkins.

Unpacking her suitcase

Sister Joan “retires” from her role as Vocation Director

Have you ever met Sister Joan Gallagher? If you have, you would remember it well. Warmth, energy, passion and fun simply radiate from her. For the past nine years, she has been the face of the Sisters of Providence to young women seriously considering or just curious about religious life.

She began in that role for Sacred Heart Province, then for St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart provinces, and then for Mother Joseph Province since 2000. As her tenure as Vocation Director drew to a close on August 1, Sister Joan said she is deeply grateful for her experience and for the women she feels fortunate to have been able to walk with on their journey.

This is a woman who truly enjoys life, goodness and beauty, which is what gives her energy. She eagerly accepts responsibility and loves to put things into order — two traits that fit a Vocation Director well. She began her job in 1994 by developing new letterhead, business cards, a brochure and display board for the Vocation Office and by encouraging development of a website. She also helped initiate creation of a Formation Team with the Vocation Director as a member. The ensuing years featured a blur of programs – Women in Ministry, retreats, dinners, the Footsteps of Mother Joseph and Come and See visits for women to become acquainted with the religious community. → →

Beginning a new life



Sister Jessica professes first vows

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Sister Joan "retires"...



Sister Joan has walked with several women on their spiritual journeys. At left, she is next to Sisters Lang Tran and AnnMary Vu, accompanied by then General Superior Gloria Keylor and Team Leader/Provincial Barbara Schamber. Above, Sister Joan stands next to Sisters Blanca Sagles and Anna Loan Nguyen, and with Sister Karen Hawkins (back row, left). Others are Sisters Teresa White, Alice St. Hilaire, and Liz Cole. In the photo at right, Sisters Joan and Alice St. Hilaire are with Sister JoAnn Showalter.



Walking with women who are discerning religious life and women in spiritual direction is a special joy to Sister Joan. What she calls "spirituality work" is so

natural to her that she continues it in her "non-working hours." Since May, she has been facilitating a spirituality group for single moms in her parish. She is

the catalyst to bring them together to talk, interact and share their thoughts, feelings and concerns.

The group came together because the parish priest picked up on these women's needs and asked Sister Joan to help.

What's next for Sister Joan? As a professional librarian in addition to her many other skills, she will assume primary responsibility for all of the common library resources in Mother Joseph Province as of November 1. Those resources include the religious community libraries in Spokane and Seattle.

Sister Joan loves collaborations, and eagerly worked with Vocation Directors in the Seattle, Spokane and Portland dioceses on retreats, college campus visits and religious education congresses. She also worked with the regional National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) and Religious Formation Conference (RFC) groups and was their regional coordinator. As a member of the Northwest Catholic Sisters public relations committee, she helped the group develop its website, brochures, directory and display boards. She directed the International Sisters of Providence Formation gathering in Edmonton in July 2002 and participated on the planning committees for other international formation gatherings. Sister Joan also embraced leadership roles on the Women of Providence in Collaboration vocation/formation group and served a two-year term on the national board of NRVC.

On top of all that, Sister Joan has spoken at countless parishes, schools, colleges, Serra groups, Life Teen groups, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) meetings and even at a Jewish education night for teens. She always has been eager to share, to answer questions and to listen.

"A Vocation Director needs a good sense of judgment of people and intuition," she explains. "She has an ability to share and to talk. Sometimes it is scary for a woman to pick up the phone and share about her life." Being the kind of person that a woman feels comfortable talking and opening up to takes the fear out of the experience, Sister Joan adds. She has seen both introverts and extroverts operate in this role, she says, but the successful ones "have been able to share their energy and the enthusiasm of the sisters as they say, 'Tell me about yourself: What brings you to looking at religious life?'"

That is the fun part of being Vocation Director, she says. "One of the

hard things is you come with excitement and enthusiasm and sometimes there are disappointments." In the times of drought, when few women are expressing interest in considering religious life, you have to keep motivated, she explains. "When sisters ask, 'So, Joan, do we have any women entering this year or applying?' I just have to say no. I have to really say to myself that this is not a numbers game." The name of the game is helping a woman find what gives her life meaning.

A new approach

FIVE-MEMBER TEAM WILL HANDLE VOCATIONS

A discernment was held last November to consider broadening the responsibilities for vocation promotion in Mother Joseph Province. After nine years as Vocation Director, Sister Joan Gallagher's time in that role was coming to a close. Who would step into her shoes and take the lead in seeking out, encouraging and walking with women exploring a vocation to religious life?

In a discernment process facilitated by Sister Margaret Botch, that question was answered. Five sisters agreed to become part of a new Vocation Team: Jacqueline Fernandes, Seattle, as coordinator; and Maria Lourdes Cleto, Seattle; Mary Hawkins, Burbank; Clare Lentz, Yakima; and Jessica Taylor, Spokane.

There are some readily apparent benefits to the new structure the province is trying, including having Vocation Team members in different places around the province, which will allow closer and more frequent personal contact with women who are considering religious life. Each member of the Vocation Team brings her own gifts to the table, as well as her own time limitations for the work depending on her other ministries. For example, Sister Jacqueline is a member of the province's Leadership Team, is liaison with the Formation Team, and serves on several boards. Sister Clare works in spiritual direction, Sister Mary works full-time at Providence High School in Burbank, and Sister Jessica volunteers at the Women's Drop-In Center in Spokane. Sister Maria Lourdes also is volunteering at St. Edward's Parish.

"With the sharing of gifts and limits, I can see that this is possible," Sister Jacqueline said at the discernment meeting. "It will be a kind of an experiment for a year or two. It is possible if we work together. We can get together next year and see what we can do."

Orientation for the group began immediately, with Sister Joan sharing the details of her work responsibilities and the initiatives she has undertaken. Sister Joan also offered to assist the Vocation Team as needed after the July 31 end of her term. A key player will be Sister Judy George, who will continue to serve as Vocation Office manager. In addition, Jennifer Roseman, director of communications and development for the province, will continue assisting the Vocation Office with marketing and publicity and will continue chairing meetings of the Vocation/Communications Advisory Group of lay women and sisters. (See related story.) Sister Joan also will continue to meet with the group.

The new official address and phone number for the office will be Sister Judy's: 9 East Ninth Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202; 509-474-2323. The e-mail address for the Vocation Office is vocations@providence.org

In her new role, Sister Joan will work with Sisters Margaret Botch and Judy Edwards to develop a plan for the future of the library and for the Seattle collection's move from the Smith Tower location to St. Joseph Residence. She also will begin putting the entire collection on the Internet.

If that does not seem quite social enough for such a people person, rest assured. Sister Joan also plans to continue meeting with the Vocation/Communications Advisory Group and to be

available to speak to parish, school and campus groups when the new Vocation Team calls on her.

But all that starts in November. In the meantime, she is savoring all of the things her busy schedule for the past nine years has cut into her enjoyment of – spending time along the beach and in the water, arts and crafts, gardening, cooking, photography, reading, and visiting with her mother in Puyallup and with her two sisters, five brothers and their children. (Another much-loved

sibling who was a Benedictine brother died at the age of 29.)

"I enjoy times with family and friends, but there is never enough time, so I value the times I have with them," she says. "I am thankful for so much ... my parents and family, my SP community, my friends, my ministries, people I have worked with, wonderful opportunities of education, travel and meeting so many wonderful people, my health, my energy, my faith, and ..." ●

Lay women and sisters put their heads together

Vocation/Communications Group is formed to tell the sisters' stories

WANTED: A few people to brainstorm ideas with a community of Catholic women religious about how to effectively share information with other women to encourage them to consider religious life.

That is how the Vocation/Communications Advisory Group began. The invitations to meet to hear about the concept went out from Vocation Director Sister Joan Gallagher and Jennifer Roseman, Director of Communications and Development. Women who attended introductory meetings held early in 2002 in Seattle and Spokane came and liked what they heard. That group of women, pictured and profiled here, have committed to lend their enthusiasm, experience, skills and expertise to help get the word out about who the Sisters of Providence are and what they do.

The idea for creating such a group was sparked by sisters' visits to the Awakenings conference at the Benedictine Monastery in Ferdinand, Ind. One of the marketing strategies discussed was bringing lay people and sisters together to employ lessons learned in the business world about marketing. Exciting things were happening when the groups explored new ways to meet and invite women, and where and how to reach them.

Sister Joan and Jennifer gave the Vocation/Communications Advisory Group its charge: "to give input and advice on effective advertising venues and concepts, offer ideas on compelling recruitment methods and tools, and share impressions of ways that young women today are seeking to dedicate their lives to something worthwhile." The plan was to meet quarterly, alternating meeting locations between Seattle and Spokane.

The first joint meeting was in May 2002 at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle. A tour of the sisters' retirement residence and a viewing of the KSPS-TV documentary, "Providence Women on the Frontier" launched a conversation about the sisters and their impact. The next meeting, in Spokane in September, was a crash course on "SP." Sister Michelle Holland told the women about the mission and vision of the religious community, and Sister Kathryn "Kitsy" Rutan, now General Superior, explained the structure of the Sisters of Providence, including the sisters and Providence Associates, sponsored ministries and governance. Then Sister Joan explained vocations processes, activities and materials, and Jennifer described the role of the communications office in facilitating those efforts.

The consensus at day's end: that the Sisters of Providence are still here, still going strong and still very much needed.

The biggest hurdle for this group so far has been busy schedules and geographic separation of its members. But where there is a will and modern communications technology, there is a way. The decision was made to hold one marathon brainstorming session, in early December 2002 in Seattle, then split into two work groups – one on the east side of the Cascades and the other on the west. The group dived into exploring the relevant questions: Who are the Sisters of Providence? What do they do? What is their charism; their uniqueness? What is their image? Why might the sisters and their works interest young women, ages 20 to 40?

When the brainstorming was finished, members of the Vocation/Communications Advisory Group compared their answers to those identified in an earlier meeting of the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Providence and the Formation Team. The similarities were uncanny and reinforcing and helped the Vocation/Communications Advisory Group to create a template of words, phrases, messages and graphic images. They will apply that template to projects including letterhead and business cards for the vocation office, vocation brochures, display boards, the website, a new informational CD-ROM, and bookmarks and prayer cards. ●

Meet the members of the Vocation/Communications Advisory Group



Two teams of women are giving a new look to the province's vocation materials. The Seattle group (above) includes Theresa Gallant, Sharon Warsinske, Jeanne Bouten, Kathleen Murray and Sister Joan Gallagher.



The Spokane group includes (inset photo) Mary Fontana, and (above) Sister Brenda Velasco, Sister Jessica Taylor, and Sarah Porter.

Learn more about them on the next page. → →

Vocation/Communications Profiles

Name: Jeanne Bouten
City: Seattle
Occupation: Financial management
Hobbies: Cycling, ashtanga yoga, traveling, discovering new places, reading and doing an occasional triathlon

Why did you agree to participate in this project?

I believe wholeheartedly in the mission of the sisters and grew up with their influence on my family's life. From an early age, I observed the admiration and respect that my parents had for the sisters. (My brothers and I had to be very well-behaved when any of the sisters came for dinner or when we went to visit them!) I have been profoundly impressed with the story of Mother Gamelin as recorded in *The King's Table*. I was honored to travel to Rome for Mother Gamelin's beatification. I participate with the sisters on this committee as I feel

it is a great opportunity to give back to a group that has blessed my family so. ●

Name: Mary Fontana
Age: 20
City: Spokane
Occupation: Student, Gonzaga University

Family: At home I have my parents, two brothers, three sisters, a dog and a guinea pig. At school, three great roommates and an ivy plant named Helix.

Hobbies: Reading, writing, singing, classical guitar, hiking

Why did you agree to participate in this project?

While I don't feel called to it myself at the moment, I think joining the "sisterhood" is a beautiful and powerful way to live out God's love. Many young women equate becoming a nun with giving up freedom and opportunity, but I really believe that religious sisters are some of the strongest and most

free women out there, and I hope more young women can come to see that. ●

Name: Theresa Gallant
Age: 53
City: Seattle
Occupation: Development Director, Holy Names Academy

Family: Ed Bulchis, husband; Anne, Laura and Emily Bulchis, daughters; Daisy, dog; Milo, cat; Cole, guinea pig

Hobbies: Running, hiking, reading, sailing

Why did you agree to participate in this project?

Sister Joan Gallagher asked me. I have admired Joan since she was a Pastoral Associate in our parish in the '90s and have learned about the many good works and interesting history of the Sisters of Providence through her. I am pleased to have

the opportunity to contribute what I can to this project and to be in the company again of Sister Joan. ●

Name: Kathleen Murray
Age: 22
City: Seattle
Occupation: Legal Student at University of Oregon in Eugene and a University of Washington grad

Family: Single; middle of three children (older sister and younger brother)

Hobbies: Volunteering, reading American Lit, team sports

Why did you agree to participate in this project?

As a young woman involved in a Catholic campus community, I am aware of the perceptions and exposure to information girls possess about their options and roles in the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, I

Novice answers God's call,

PROFESSING FIRST VOWS

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The theme that Sister Jessica chose for her vow ceremony is very personal: "We are called. We are chosen. We are Christ for one another." She claims not to be particularly artistic, but she created symbols that have been "present in my journey that encourage and guide me." Those symbols, which adorn a cross, include a grapevine, representing "the growth that continues to happen"; a likeness of Mother Emilie Gamelin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence; a heart with seven swords, suggesting the Mother of Sorrows; the world, "because I am a creation-centered person"; and Jesus, represented by a drop of blood falling onto spirit, represented by fire."

Only one word could describe Jessica Taylor, SP, in the weeks, days and hours leading up to her pronouncement of first vows in August – "EXCITED!" If she said it once, she said it one hundred times, and each time it rang true. "It is exciting, it is a leap of faith and it is somewhat scary because I have to trust that I am following what God wants," she said in one long rush of breath. "It is excitement mixed with joy and happiness."

When the appointed moment arrived, her joy was tempered with sorrow over the death of her beloved grandmother LaVerne Davis, but Sister Jessica felt confident that she was rejoicing in heaven.

Jessica Taylor, who was born April 8, 1972, in Seattle, recalls that the first time she thought about becoming a sister she was too young to really even know what that was. "It seemed kind of cool to be a sister, but I didn't know anything about the life, only the stereotype." That was in the seventh grade. By the time she reached her final year at Highline High School in Burien, "God's call began permeating my thoughts," she says.

She was 18, and she still did not know any sisters, but she began calling various religious orders "to see if they would want me. I didn't know the process and I hadn't journeyed with anyone, so it was very cold, out of the blue." The answer from all of the religious communities was that she was too young, "which was true," she acknowledges. So she enrolled at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, where she would receive bachelor's degrees in psychology and special education. "But I still was yearning to follow God and seeking more than just a job."

It was the first time she thought about religious life with the information needed to truly discern a call. She went to a vocation meeting and listened to the sisters talking about their daily lives. "Their lives were not much different than my own," Sister Jessica explains, "but in community, what they did they did together. They weren't alone in what they were doing. That is what really captivated me. Spirituality, ministry and community – it is hard to find all three together without religious life."

Once she established that she felt a call from God, the next step was deciding on a religious community. How did she choose the Sisters of Providence? "I'm very logical," Sister Jessica offers. "I knew what I wanted to do and I looked at communities with those ministries. I wanted a community with sisters that liked each other and that was progressing, not dying out." The joy and spirit of the Sisters of Providence attracted like a magnet. She felt an instant connection. "They had all those things, plus there was a real family spirit and a community of women with love for each other. Their community days were hugs and happiness and non-stop talking with each other."



Jessica Taylor, SP