

## A Homily from Rose

What do you want to be when you grow up??

This was the question Sr. Culan asked us in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. So after school I asked Mom, "What should I write about"?

Well, how about a secretary, like I was? No

What about a nurse, to help people? No .... A teacher? No

"Mom, I want to be a sister". At that point, I think her jaw dropped in surprise, but she swallowed hard and said, "Well then, let's write about that!"

Growing up in Chicago, we had a Catholic school, 8 grades, 1400 kids, classrooms numbering 60 or more, taught by sisters and a few lay teachers.

In spite of the hard work, I saw that they seemed to have fun together.

(That was important to me !) And when I saw a pamphlet from the Franciscans that said, we are "Sisters of a Singing Saint," I was hooked.

In the convent, everything was new, new clothing, new ways to pray, keeping silence at meals, learning what obedience was. But I was hooked. It was exciting.

Our novitiate class numbered 35 and together with the class ahead of us, we literally did all the work.... Cleaning, laundry, sewing room, sacristy work, picking apples from the nine orchards, and of course the kitchen. There were several sections to the kitchen. We cooked for the 200 plus who lived at the motherhouse plus weekend retreatants.

But I was not from a farm, like many others, and did not know much about cooking, so I was assigned to VEGETABLES ! Yes, I was in "VEGETABLES!" I did not get MEATS OR BAKERY, ....mistakes there could be costly.

One time baked beans was on the menu. I only knew that baked beans come out of a can called "Campbells." However, I followed the directions.. I soaked them, and mixed them and baked them, only to have Sister Josette take them out of the oven and scream " Bullets ! They are bullets" ... as we looked at little black balls, hard as rocks. Needless to say, we opened cans of Campbells to save the day.

The community I entered in Rochester in 1960 had 1000 sisters. We staffed hospitals, high schools grade schools and a college. The older sisters did not have to worry because we teachers and nurses supported them.

Teaching salaries were meager. The parish provided a convent and a car.

Parishioners often brought food from their gardens and farms. In the beginning of

St. Mary's Hospital, the nursing sisters, in the beginning, washed bed linens, scrubbed floors and grew produce for the hospital food.

When the Second Vatican Council happened, the Pope asked every order to send 10% of its members to mission work.

And so, we sent Sr. Barbara and Ann to Peru who rode mules to reach the highland villages of Huermachá.

And Sr. Gretchen open a college to educate the native sisters.

Sr. Maigread and Colleen cared for the poor in Charleston, SC

And in Harlan KY, Sr. Mary and Nancy taught reading to Appalachian adults.

Much of their support came from the Motherhouse.

Now these sisters are in their 70's, 80's and 90's, and are only a sample of the hundreds who gave their lives to teach us... to heal us... to care for the poor among us. We depended on them, now they depend on us!

Years ago, there were lots of young sisters.

Every year the classes numbered 35 to 50. Not true today.

Many orders are having financial trouble caring for their elderly.

To support the elderly religious, many communities, both men and women, depend on the yearly collection from the National Office of Retirement for Religious. And here's where you can help.

Envelopes from last week's bulletin can be put in the collection today or mailed to the office. Checks made out to St. Thomas Aquinas and the total will be sent in. If you don't have an envelope, there will be a second collection. Though, I am no longer a Franciscan, I am speaking for the many retired religious.

You have been so generous. Two years ago you gave \$2713. Last year you doubled it, \$4239. I hope we can match that again. For the many religious we don't even know, but who need us, I say thank you for offering them security in their later years.