

# Everyday is a gift



Born in Rochester, New York, I was blessed to be raised in a loving family. My parents were very hard-working and until I graduated from high school I shared this life with two sisters - I am the middle child. Often during elementary and secondary school, the thought of becoming a religious sister surfaced. I guess it was natural since in my 12 years of education, I only had Sisters of St. Joseph for teachers. However, I never felt called to be a teacher but rather to be a missionary in a foreign land (preferably Africa). After my high school senior retreat, I did something about it and seriously started searching for communities that did foreign mission work. I chose (although actually God did the choosing) the international congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood located in Reading, PA. There were two main reasons why I chose this congregation. One of their requirements is a sense of humor and in their vocation advertisement

there was a picture of a Precious Blood sister on a horse in an African village! That was the icing on the cake. I entered on September 1, 1963.

Following three years of formation (learning what it means to be a vowed religious in community), I professed my first vows and was sent for further education. I attended Kutztown University close to Reading and earned my B.S. in Biology and General Science and an M.Ed. (specializing in Biology). During and after my graduate studies, I was the first Catholic sister to teach at this state University and I discovered that a secondary call was to be a teacher! I professed my Final Vows on January 29, 1972. I have been in diverse ministries



throughout my religious life. I taught Biology at Holy Name High School (where I also coached girls' basketball, and took my Science club to places like Wallops Island and the PA Little Grand Canyon) and Alvernia University in Reading. I was missioned to South Africa for six years (no I never rode a horse) and my desire to go to Africa was granted. The people, places and experiences are living memories for me. I worked as a pastoral associate at St Ignatius Loyola Parish and St. John Baptist de La Salle Parish, both in the Reading area, have been involved in the formation program and administration within the North American Province of my religious community, and served on various diocesan and congregational committees. I have also enjoyed giving spiritual workshops/retreats, and helping people to experience God's Love. Presently, I live in Queens, NY with Sr. Marian who teaches at St. John's University.

I am so grateful for my life! All that I have experienced has been and continues to be a GIFT from God. There have been many challenges along the way. I have had several physical illnesses from childhood to the present but I live in HOPE! God has guided me throughout my life and will also guide me to my eternal home. Remember, each day is a GIFT! A scripture quote that has influenced my life since that senior retreat in high school is "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal 2:20a) John the Baptist, my patron saint, said it in a different way, "He must increase; I must decrease." (John 3:30)

With God's grace, I strive to continue to grow each day in the spirit of these transformative sacred words.

Sister Joanne Leccese, CPS  
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