

Sr. Doris (Mary Sheil) Regan, OP – 50 Year Jubilee

Sr. Doris Regan, OP, is celebrating her 50th Jubilee as a Dominican Sister of St. Mary of the Springs, Columbus, Ohio. Born in New York City, Sr. Doris graduated from Dominican Academy in Manhattan. She recalls her initial experience with the Sisters on the faculty there. “I knew I wanted to be a teacher, and those Dominican Sisters who taught me were just that - wonderful teachers and wonderful human beings.

“When I wanted to join the Dominicans after high school, though, my parents suggested that I wait for a couple of years, since my brother had just entered the Jesuits and there are only three of us. So, for two years, I went to Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, Connecticut, where I encountered more Dominican Sister Educators.

“I don’t remember a moment when I said, ‘Aha! I have a vocation!’ It was more of a feeling that I wanted something more, a sense that somehow I needed to go and see if that was so.” She entered the Dominican Novitiate in Columbus. Recently, my brother-in-law asked me if I had ever had any doubts about it all and I asked him, ‘Have you ever had any doubts in your 47 years of marriage?’ We both laughed. Of course there are moments when one wonders, but they don’t last long. If I had my life to do over - I would make the same decision about my life.”

After Profession, Sr. Doris graduated with a bachelor’s degree from the College of St. Mary of the Springs. Later, she earned a master’s degree from Catholic University in Washington, DC. Sister taught elementary school in Ohio before joining the faculties of St. Mary of the Springs Academy and Bishop Watterson High School to teach Latin. She served as vice-principal and then as principal of Northwest Catholic High School in West Hartford, Connecticut, for 24 years. In 1987, during a study tour in El Salvador and Mexico for educators, she discerned a “call within a call” to mission outside the USA, particularly in pastoral ministry in Bolivia.

She resigned her administrative position at Northwest Catholic and took a sabbatical. During that year, she spent some months in theological renewal, hospital chaplaincy training, and a month in discernment with the Maryknoll Mission Society Discernment Program regarding a possible mission abroad. “I was sure that they would tell me I was too old to be a missionary,” Sr. Doris says. “I did not know a word of Spanish; I had never ministered outside of the USA. Yet, I was hardly two days into the workshop when it became abundantly clear that I was, indeed, being called to something new.” For almost nine years, she was part of a Maryknoll Rural Pastoral Team, travelling up and down tributaries of the Amazon, visiting communities, and forming Delegates of the Word.

Today, Sr. Doris finds herself teaching and administering still - as a theology teacher for the laity in the Diocese of San Pedro Sula, Honduras; as a member of a Prison Pastoral Ministry Team; as part of a Dominican Preaching Team of Friars, Sisters, and Laity, giving workshops in Honduras and elsewhere; and as administrator of Casa Aurora, the Living-with-HIV Center for children with HIV/AIDS. (She is especially soft-hearted about these children.)

“I happen to be in an area where there is a high concentration of HIV/AIDS cases, second only to Africa,” Sr. Doris said. “The children and their families can come to

Casa Aurora and be attended to in many ways – physically, psychologically, socially, etc. I ask myself at the end of each day after reading the Gospel – where did I find this Gospel today? Almost always, it is in the context of something that occurred in Casa Aurora or on a home visit to families – a contact with a parent, a child, or our volunteers. God is indeed present in those I meet.” This year, Casa Aurora is observing its tenth anniversary with the 26 adolescents, who, Sister explains, “have grown with the program [and who] will be celebrating with the children and adults of the 110 families that are now being attended to through an integrated health program.”

Sr. Doris remembers, “There is a prayer at the end of the Liturgical Hours that we pray, ‘May the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil, and bring us to eternal life.’ In Honduras, we add ‘but not too soon’ to the eternal life part because it is a very violent environment. I have lived a full life of teaching, preaching - 29 years of it in USA and 21 years outside of the USA in three different countries. My family, my Congregation, my friends in community, and my pastoral experiences have all been sources of nourishment and accompaniment for me all along the way – in happy and lonely moments as well. My life has been well blessed.”