

Sister Anne Moroney

A New Beginning

Three years ago, Sister Anne Moroney learned that the Catholic high school where she had been teaching was closing. Sister Anne had served 47 years in the ministry of education, both in the classroom and as a principal. Most people in Sister Anne's situation would have been content to enjoy a well earned retirement.

However, Sister Anne Moroney did not see retirement as an option as long as she was still able to work in ministry. She searched for and found a new beginning, and today is enjoying what she calls the happiest years of her life serving people in need as the Director of the Community Outreach Program at St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic, New Jersey.

Anne Moroney was born and raised in Salem, MA, the place she readily confirms is known as "the witch city." She was the middle child in a devout Catholic family. Anne greatly admired her father, who was an amputee below the knee but did not let his prosthesis slow him down. Her father was also a strong example of faith. Sister Anne says, "We used to tell my father that he was holier than the Pope!"

Anne received her elementary education from Sisters of Charity at St. Mary's School in Salem. After she went on to St. James High School, where she was taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame, Anne remained close to the Sisters of Charity at her home parish. "A group of us always went to see the nuns on Friday night after their prayers were over. We would just sit on the floor and talk with them."

As Anne considered what she would do after graduation, for a time she wanted to be a mortician. "A friend of mine's father was a mortician. I thought it was fascinating."

God had other plans for Anne, however. Anne came to the realization that she was called to join the Sisters of Charity. She trusted that if she applied and was accepted into the Sisters of Charity, "then that's where I was meant to be."

Anne was indeed accepted into the Sisters of Charity and was one of a band of 72 young women who entered in 1960. She earned a degree in education from the College of Saint Elizabeth and was sent to begin teaching at St. Mary School in Waterbury, CT in 1964. From 1968-1984, Sister Anne taught at Holy Trinity School in Hackensack, NJ, and over the years taught almost every grade in the school. In 1985, Sister Anne earned a Masters Degree in Pastoral Ministry from Seton Hall University. She served as principal of St. Peter's Elementary School in Jersey City from 1984 – 2000, where she especially enjoyed working with the Jesuits. In 2000, she joined the staff of St. Mary High School, teaching religion and also working with students through the guidance department until the school closed in June, 2011.

With the closing of St. Mary High School, Sister Anne was forced to start a new chapter in her life and ministry. She initially thought that "the one place I didn't want to work was in a hospital." However, when she learned that Sister Marion Scranton was looking for someone to head the Community Outreach Program at St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic, she decided to give it a try.



Sister Anne admits that the adjustment to her new role was difficult and that, at the beginning, she was not happy in her new ministry. When she first started the job, she knew very little about what she would be doing and she was also very shy. She laughs, "I heard Sister Marion say to someone that she never heard me speak in 50 years!" As Sister Anne became more comfortable in her role, she was also drawn out of any shyness and came to love her work and all the "amazing" people she meets through her ministry.

Today, Sister Anne is thriving in a ministry that is a whirlwind of activity. Her ministry takes her out in the community more than she is in the office. She interacts with a broad array of agencies and regularly visits schools and nursing homes. She is constantly on the go, giving talks, distributing information, visiting people in their homes and working to get them the help that they need. She notes that last week alone, she was at four health fairs. One of her current initiatives is a program called Vial of Life, where she helps senior citizens record their pertinent medical history in a packet easily accessible to EMTs. This program is particularly important to Sister Anne because she survived the medical emergency of a diabetic coma. Another ongoing program is Madre a Madre, taught by Luz Flores, a Seton Associate. Sister Anne frequently visits the Madres in order to get to know them on a one to one basis.

Within the hospital, Sister Anne works with young mothers and mothers-to-be who participate in a women's program. She uses her network of contacts to collect and distribute clothes, diapers and other supplies for the women and their children. "If we don't have it, we try to find it for them." A generous donor has provided stuffed animals, which are popular with the young children who accompany their mothers to the women's program. Sister Anne makes sure that "if they take a stuffed animal, they also take a book. We want the mothers to read to their children."

Because Sister Anne has undergone the amputation of toes on her left foot, she has a special connection with patients who undergo amputations. "Whenever someone is in the hospital for an amputation, I go to talk with them. I want to give them hope and let them know that they will be able to keep going."

Seeing Sister Anne interact with people at St Mary's hospital, there is no evidence that she was ever shy. As she walks down the corridor, she stops to tease a young co-worker who has lively music playing in her office, and says, "I just love working with young people!" As she passes the hospital gift shop, she pauses to open the door to greet the woman who is arranging a display. Continuing her walk, she is delighted to see a man who volunteers to bring communion to patients. After they chat about various patients, the man remarks, "Sister Anne, she's a special lady!"

The people around Sister Anne seem to energize her, and her positive, indomitable spirit gives joy and hope to others. Sister Anne loves her work, which she finds exciting and rewarding, and she appreciates the opportunity to meet "so many nice, nice people." She reflects that "these have been the happiest years of my life, being able to make a difference to people who need help, sometimes helping people get themselves out of a hole. God has given me the grace to do this. I'm so fortunate." Sister Anne vows to continue her work as long as she is able. Her reason is simple: "You do it not because it is expected of you, but you do it because it's in your heart."