

Sister Catherine Drury

“Providence can provide, Providence did provide,
Providence will provide.”

This assurance, from a favorite manual of nighttime prayers, is a cornerstone of Sister Catherine Drury’s faith and her life as a Sister of Charity. Sister Cathy has gone through changes and uncertainties in her life with steadfast trust. She holds fast to her calling to live a consecrated life, no matter what the setting, and she trusts that God will continue to use her according to His plan.

Sister Cathy’s story begins in New Brunswick, NJ, where she grew up as the beloved daughter of Irish-born parents. The education she received from Sisters of Charity in elementary school through high school planted the idea very early on in her life that she might be called to one day join the Sisters.

“The idea of entering the Sisters of Charity came and went, but it always came back.”



After a year of classes at Douglass College, it became evident that she indeed was called to join the Sisters of Charity. Her parents were initially concerned by her decision, for they did not wish for her to sacrifice the opportunity to become the first member of the family to graduate from college. In retrospect, they did not need to be concerned, for Sister Cathy continued as a life-long learner, earning multiple advanced degrees.

Catherine Drury entered the Sisters of Charity on August 20, 1958. She threw herself into her new life as a Sister, enjoying religious studies with the other postulants and completing her undergraduate education with a degree in Mathematics from the College of Saint Elizabeth in 1963. After graduation, she started teaching, first at the elementary level in St. Mary’s School in Plainfield and then as a high school math teacher at St. Patrick’s School in Elizabeth and Mother Seton High School in Clark. In the summers between academic terms, she took graduate school classes at Boston College and earned a Masters Degree in Mathematics in 1968.

After a two year break from teaching to work in the Diocesan Schools Office in Newark, Sister Cathy went back to teaching math, this time at the college level. While on the math faculty at Felician College, she was asked if she could also teach a computer course. This request, at a time when few people had formal computer education, was yet another point in which “Providence did provide,” taking Sister Cathy’s life down a very different course.

In order to learn computer science, Sister Cathy enrolled in a graduate program at New Jersey Institute of Technology, taking computer classes while continuing to teach college math. A chance encounter with a parent of one her former students led her to leave teaching to serve at St. Mary’s Hospital in Passaic, where her valuable computer expertise enabled her to select, install, and integrate personal computers in the hospital. St. Mary’s also supported her continuing graduate studies, and Sister Cathy earned her Masters Degree in Computer Science in 1989.

When the position at St. Mary’s Hospital ended, Sister Cathy gained further computer expertise from a five-year stint working in systems design and programming at AT&T. Besides receiving training in the very latest computer systems, she also found herself in a new role as a lone Sister of Charity in a very corporate environment. “People were always curious about the Sisters of Charity and wondered how a Sister came to be working there. I got to know a lot of interesting people, and I ended up serving on the Diversity Council.”

Armed with all the experience and high level training from AT&T, Sister Cathy went back to working in a Sister of Charity ministry in 1995. She spent 18 years at St. Joseph Hospital in Paterson, setting up the hospital's in-house email system and internet and working as computer security coordinator and network analyst.

Although Sister Cathy's position with St. Joseph Hospital was recently eliminated due to budget constraints, Sister Cathy trusts that the next best thing is ahead and that God will soon reveal His plan for her. In the meantime, she continues to draw strength from her personal faith and the support she receives from other sisters in the community.

She enjoys sharing her life with others, in reflection groups as well as in social settings. She believes that "God's spirit is in all of us," and, contrary to the stereotype of a computer expert, she loves being with people. When asked about her idea of fun, she says, "a good movie, good food, an outing with friends" and then laughingly adds, "a party!"

Sister Cathy marvels at the collective resolve and strength of the Sisters of Charity. "If a Sister knows something has to be done, you know that we'll get together and gather the resources and do it. You don't have to try to meet a need by yourself. Whether it's in immigration, or helping the homeless, or whatever, you know that when sisters see need, they'll go after it and do it."

Sister Cathy supports the initiatives of the Sisters of Charity with her actions and with her prayers. She remains a model of faith and trust in God's Providence. "Even though I sometimes worry about silly things, I know that the big things will work out. They always do." With her varied experiences, considerable abilities, and unshakable trust, Sister Cathy is ready for whatever Providence is sure to provide.