

Sister Catherine Morrisett

When Sister Catherine Morrisett reflects upon her ministry as a Sister of Charity, her narrative overflows with passion, intellect and interesting anecdotes -- punctuated with a lot of laughter. It soon becomes apparent why she is a self-described extrovert and “Energizer Bunny.” Sister Catherine has had three different careers as a Sister of Charity: educator, pastoral minister, and psychotherapist. In each role, she has given of herself without reserve, developed and employed the highest level of professional skills, and grounded her ministry in the charism of charity.

Catherine’s journey as a Sister of Charity began in 1960, when she entered the Convent after attending a year at Montclair State College. She admired the sisters who were so dedicated to their mission. She was excited about the opportunity to take up that mission and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



During her years of formation, Sister Catherine completed her undergraduate education at the College of Saint Elizabeth and earned a degree in science. In 1964, she eagerly took on her first assignment as a fifth grade teacher at St. Thomas the Apostle School in Bloomfield. After two years, she was moved to Our Lady of Visitation School in Paramus, where she taught junior high science. Sister Catherine absolutely loved teaching. “I really thought that teaching science would be my ministry as a Sister of Charity for the rest of my life.”

While teaching at Paramus, Sister Catherine became increasingly involved with the ministries of the parish. She taught Catholic formation and worked with couples and families to institute the new Christian Family Movement. Working with parishioners was a rewarding complement to her ministry as a teacher. She remembers that “it was a wonderful time in the life of the Church.”

Sister Catherine continued her active role in the life of the church when she moved to Ramsey to serve as a principal in St. Paul’s School. After three years as a principal, she realized that administration was not her calling. With the encouragement of another sister, she enrolled at Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington and earned a Masters in Divinity.

Sister Catherine used her pastoral training in ten years of full time pastoral ministry at St. Paul’s Church, where she developed wide ranging team ministries and also led retreats. She especially enjoyed teaching in the RCIA program. She marvels, “To see those adults come into the Church at Easter Vigil was such an experience!”

A turning point for Sister Catherine came as the result of attending a two year program to help bridge people to the counseling they needed. Her supervisor in that program, a Presbyterian minister, challenged her to consider counseling full time. In 1986, Sister Catherine enrolled in the Blanton-Peale Graduate Institute in New York City, where she received “an amazing education” in individual and group psychotherapy, including specialized training in marital counseling. The Blanton-Peale training was rooted in spirituality: a “three legged stool” of body, mind and spirit. Following graduation from

Blanton-Peale, Sister Catherine completed her education by earning a Doctorate in Ministry from New York Theological Seminary.

In 1995, Sister Catherine returned to New Jersey to practice as a pastoral psychotherapist with Grace Counseling Center. She has been happily engaged there ever since and loves the diversity of individual and marital therapy. “It’s a validation to be allowed to heal people, to know that you have the authority and the educational piece to do that spiritual integration and healing that many people need.”

Sister Catherine believes that the charism of charity impels her to work to meet people’s needs in cases where others might hesitate. She is acutely aware of her calling “to really listen to the heart of the matter.” People trust her and open up to her, and as they share their struggles or grief, she brings hope and healing.

Sister Catherine reflects that her work of freeing people from emotional bondage follows the call of Luke 4:18 “to bring good news to the poor . . . , to proclaim liberty to captives . . . , (and) to let the oppressed go free.” She recognizes that as the ministries of the Sisters of Charity continue to evolve, they remain rooted in the foundations of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Merillac. “They worked to meet the needs of whomever they met. That’s exactly what the Sisters of Charity do today.”

Sister Catherine faces the future with abundant hope and good humor. “I never know where I’m going to be. Whenever people ask, I try to say yes, because you never know where the Spirit will take you.” She is so thankful for all for all the opportunities and blessings that she has received as a Sister of Charity. “To think how I have been educated and enriched by the community! I am surrounded with a lot of love. . . . I have been richly blessed.” She laughingly observes that the Sisters of Charity “are quite a group.” That group has surely been enriched by the dedicated ministry and loving spirit of Sister Catherine Morrisett.