

Sister Mary Pauline Hogan

With countless acts of kindness and reverence for each person she meets, Sister Mary Pauline Hogan has always tried to be God's instrument. She truly listens and offers comfort and encouragement to people when they need it the most. In her current ministry as a hospital chaplain and throughout her varied ministries as a Sister of Charity, she quietly leads by example to share God's love and help others to trust in God's providence.



Sister Mary Pauline was born and raised in Boston, a place that will always mean "home" no matter where she lives. As the oldest of three children in her family, she had significant responsibilities from an early age and learned to look out for others. She recalls, "I always had an inclination to reach out for the underdog." She stills gets upset when she recalls how her grade school classmates ridiculed another girl whose family lacked good health habits. "I tried to find ways to assist her instead of making fun of her."

Beginning in her fifth grade year at St. Joseph's Grammar School and later at St. Joseph's Academy in Roxbury, Sister Mary was taught by Sisters of Charity. These Sisters made a profound impression on her. "I loved the nuns in school. They knew you and they knew how much to push and how much to correct. They had the greatest way of doing it." As a young girl, Sister Mary was also inspired by grand aunts who were Sisters of Charity, including one grand aunt who was a missionary in China and another who served and died in Bolivia. She says, "The Sisters were always in the forefront. There never seemed to be a reason why they couldn't help someone."

A deep desire to help others led Sister Mary to volunteer at Boston City Hospital. Beginning at age 14, she donned an orange smock and delivered meal trays to patients in the wards. She struck up conversations as she worked and even today vividly remembers many of the patients she served.

Following graduation from high school, Sister Mary worked full time at the Telephone Company plus part time at Brigham's to help support her family while she attended night classes in education and business at Boston College. As she neared graduation from BC, she began teaching at St. Patrick School in Stoneham under the leadership of a Sister who was both "a marvelous school woman and good friend." She decided that the time had come to petition to enter the Sisters of Charity. She thought, "If I keep waiting I'm never going to be able to do it." The Sisters of Charity accepted her, and the Sisters and lay teachers at St. Patrick's celebrated with an end-of-year party. "The Sisters said, 'God bless you' and the lay teachers said, 'Remember, you were once a lay teacher.' And I always did remember that the Sisters never went it alone, but had wonderful individuals who were with us and beside us."

Sister Mary Pauline entered the Sisters of Charity in 1963 and began on a long and rewarding journey of ministry. Because she already had her college degree and experience as a teacher, she was quickly missioned to continue teaching. In the early years of her religious life, she taught at both the elementary and the high school levels in schools in New Jersey and in Massachusetts. A recent message from a former student who is now in his 60's shows the impact that Sister Mary made on her students. "He emailed me to say he that I was one of his favorite teachers and that he would love to sit down and talk. I don't know exactly what I said or did to make such an impression on him, but I have always tried to treat each person with reverence. You just don't know the impression you make on people."

After 22 years in the classroom, Sister Mary moved on to other ministries. Among her various responsibilities, she served as Activities Director at St. Vincent's Nursing Home in Montclair, New Jersey. She enjoyed planning creative and engaging activities, including borrowing real bowling balls and pins from a local alley to allow residents to bowl. (She recalls that though it was a lot of fun, it was also very tiring to keep running back and forth to support the bowler and then reset the pins!)

A "super high point" in Sister Mary's life was her ministry as Administrator at the Catherine Mary McHale Center in Newton, MA. This was the home for the Sisters of Charity who lived and served in the Boston area. She says, "Though

my title was 'Administrator,' today they might call it 'animator, initiator, supporter, respecter, and lover in the most pure sense of the word.' We truly worked very hard at getting a community of equals as much as possible."

For the past seven years, Sister Mary has served as Chaplain at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Paterson, NJ. She leads prayer services, offers comfort and support to patients and their families, and directs a variety of special programs to meet people's needs at difficult times, including a ministry to families who have lost a baby. She takes time to get to know hospital staff and to tell them that she appreciates what they do. "Nobody goes it alone. You lead by example and when you see a good job being done, you say something!"

Sister Mary treasures the loving friendship and abiding support provided by the Sisters of Charity community. She sees her own ministry as a continuum of the work of those who went ahead of her. Sister Mary tries to live by the teaching and example of Mother Xavier, who always affirmed, "God alone." Each day of her ministry is founded on trust in God's providence. She says without hesitation, "Through thick or thin, God alone gets me through."

Sister Mary sometimes prays words attributed to Dag Hammarskjold which sum up her faith, her trust in God, and her continuing desire to be God's instrument.

*For all that has been, Thanks.
For all that will be, Yes.*