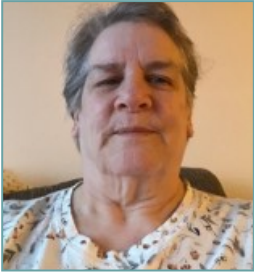


VOCATION ANIMATION - The Vocation of a Sister Teacher Pat Carter, CSJ, on behalf of the Vocation Animation Committee



I started this journey as the eldest child of five siblings. Every day I would return home from Kindergarten to teach my brothers and sisters and teddy bears what I had learned that day from my teacher. So, I do not think it was a surprise to anyone in my family that after the novitiate I would attend the Faculty of Education.

At the Faculty, in preparation for upcoming interviews our professors told us, "If you did not attend school in Sault Ste. Marie, there is no point in sending an application there. They only hire their own." However, for this applicant there was a loop hole, there was a number of positions protected for Religious in the Collective Agreement, so I was hired.

I remember the early years like they happened yesterday. I had a HPE degree so I was happy to teach Physical Education, but being the last one hired, I was invited to stretch my skill sets to teach Grade 9 and 10 students Science, PE, English, Religion, and anything else the department heads wanted me to tackle. Courses were offered initially at the General and Advanced levels. I remember that in my first year our Board experienced a six-week strike action. Once the strike was settled, I asked the Sister teachers I lived with, "How do I determine what to cut out of the courses?" Their guidance, "Teach the important ideas." In my

limited experience, all of the ideas were important.

Overtime I wanted to exercise my leadership skills so I applied to be the Athletic director and Department Head of PE. When opportunity provided a chance, I took the role of chaplaincy leader. I missed the classroom interaction too much, so I returned to teaching and became the Religious Education department leader. Of course, with every government there were new policies of 'de-streaming', and then restreaming with new names for the streams. There were tough days being an educator, especially with Mike Harris' "Common Sense Revolution." I had had the dream of being the Religious Education Consultant and had been working on a Master's degree to prepare myself for that role. The "Common Sense" agenda removed all curricular support positions in school boards, decreased the number of school boards, eliminated Grade 13 and introduced EQAO testing of students. And we had another general strike in the province.

Eventually the government changed and curricular supports were put back into place and I was able to become the RE Consultant and Faith Animator. It has been a dream job for the last 15 years. I was invited to work on provincial teams to create new RE curricula and to create resources for Catholic Education Week with other dedicated educators from across the province.

My career has blessed my life with meaningful ministry, memories and relationships to last a lifetime. I may be the last teacher who is also a Sister of St. Joseph in Canada. I am looking forward to the new endeavors that God has instore for me.