

Sister Rosemary Hock

As a young sister, what did I never expect to be experiencing as a Sister of St. Joseph today.

When I first read the question what came to mind was very superficial. I never thought I would be getting up in the morning wondering what I was going to wear. Did everything match? Fixing my hair, with money in my purse, driving alone to a ministry and not the one I had expected to do all my religious life. But then I read the words “in terms of mission.”

The one thing that touches me deeply every day that I never expected to experience is walking into our beautiful chapel for prayer/liturgy with not one novice/postulant, not one vibrant young woman present and eager to receive the habit or pronounce vows, eager to carry out the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph to preach, teach and live the gospel.

I never expected that our presence would be diminished to so few or even no one in our schools, hospitals, colleges. Many of these wonderful institutions disappearing completely, that local communities would be reduced from as many as forty+ to houses of two or even one.

I never expected to experience Vatican II which had a profound effect not only on our church, but on our very lives. It was religious women, who wholeheartedly took to implementing so many of the recommendations made by the Church we loved so much and desired to serve.

Was I so naïve as to think that religious life would stay the same- that nothing would change? How unrealistic since everything around us was changing.

Many things I never expected to experience have been so up-lifting and life giving as a woman and a religious. Sisters of St. Joseph have become Parish Life Directors, have been delivering homilies, giving retreats, spiritual direction, working with the disadvantaged, the marginalized, immigrants, the imprisoned, caring for family members and many more ministries in which our presence is so needed in our world today.

The more I reflected on the question I began to realize our mission is the same to preach and live the gospel. It is the way we are carrying it out that I never expected to experience. We may be fewer in number, but we still struggle every day to live out the gospel. It is the unexpected that energizes me, knowing that we are living with the times branching out, planning for the future through our inspired and courageous leadership with deep sincerity and trust in the Spirit.

It gives me great joy to know that God loves each one of us unconditionally and it is God's love that enables us daily to continue the mission of the gospel. I firmly believe that God will continue to shower choicest blessings on the Sisters of St. Joseph, the community of the great love of God.