

*Sister Virginia Pearl, CSJ (Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia)***'The joy of knowing I am where God wants me to be is awesome'**

Sister Virginia is the chaplain for women, men and youth at the Larned State Mental Hospital and the Correctional Facility.

SKR: Why did you enter religious life?

Sister Virginia Pearl, CSJ: I entered religious life because like in the "Hound of Heaven," I was "hounded" by God, whom I tried to hide from. God's call was so clear; the third time it came, I could not run away from it any longer. "I was smitten to my knees."

SKR: Why did you choose your particular congregation?

Sister Virginia: I chose to enter The Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kansas, because they seemed real. Each Sister I knew at Marymount College, where I attended, seemed down to earth, and displayed to me unconditional love for each of us students. I felt a definite communion and warmth with each Sister I came to know. It was a gut feeling that drew me to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

SKR: What have been your greatest challenges as a religious?

Sister Virginia: One year I had 40 wiggly second graders in the same classroom.

One summer I was sent to summer school by myself when I was in temporary profession. It was a challenge, but also a real affirmation to me that I was capable of such. When Sisters first began working in parishes as Pastoral Ministers, it was a challenge to some of the priests. They soon welcomed us when they saw how ready the people were for such ministry.

SKR: What have been your greatest joys?

Sister Virginia: My greatest joys are so many. First, just being a Sister delights me. It was hard for me to listen to God when God was calling me, because I thought that being a Sister would be boring. I became so surprised that we could have fun, yet be a good Sister. The joy of knowing I am where God wants me to be is awesome. It was God's idea, and God has continued to woo me throughout the years with good friends, good homes and good folks to live and work with.

Other joys include being with Mother Teresa for three full days. Walking throughout the Land of Jesus to Bethlehem with a group of folks on the Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage, hiking and



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have been filled with utter joy daily.

SKR: What kind of ministries have you been/are you involved in?

Sister Virginia: I taught for many years, usually in the Primary grades, and at Marymount College in the Religious Studies Department. I did Pastoral Ministry in parishes, teaching catechists and

camping in Colorado and Alaska with my friend, Mary Wiles, living in Larche, homes for mentally disabled women and men. Other joys are very simple, such as being with and visiting with our Sister Mary Julia Stegman, who is 99 years young; listening to women and men who are in prison who choose to do a fifth step in their Recovery Program, working in New Orleans and Greensburg with groups; seeing Mike Sweeney hit his 100th Home run in the Royals Stadium, Giving Eucharist to youth, women and men who come to services at Larned State Hospital and the prison; walking in the footsteps of my Pottawatomie Grandmother who was on the Trail of Death. You can see, my days and years

guiding families in Religious Education Intergenerational Programs. Presently, I am Chaplain for women, men and youth at Larned State Mental Hospital and the Correctional Facility. In all my years I have felt a stance of deep peace of heart and am grateful for God's loving call. One of the goals of our Congregation is that we might be "In God, for God and Before God." My ministry helps me to try to live this goal.

SKR: Please offer a quote that makes a statement about the value of religious life for you.

Sister Virginia: "Thou drawest love from Thee, who drawest me." (All quotes are from "The Hound of Heaven," by Francis Thompson.)

*Father Rene Guesnier, OSB (Order of St. Benedict)***The old Latin Mass: 'How beautiful it is!'**

Father Rene is pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Seward.

SKR: Why did you enter religious life?

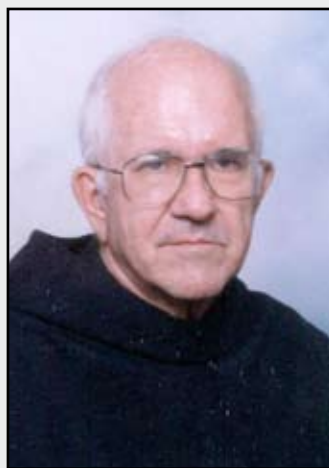
Father Rene Guesnier, OSB: In the study of St. Thomas Aquinas in Philosophy I came across his teaching about the religious life. He said somewhere that it was the most perfect way of life. That was my primary reason.

SKR: Why did you choose your particular congregation?

Father Rene: My first eight years in the seminary were for the Wichita Diocese and later the Dodge City Diocese. After college, Bishop Franz released me to join (the Order of St. Benedict at) Conception Abbey. I loved those first few years in the abbey. I loved the example of the Benedictine monks and the abbey's dedication to the celebration of the Divine Office and the sacred liturgy.

SKR: What have been your greatest challenges as a religious?

Father Rene: By far the changes that took place after Vatican II left me bewildered and I still have a difficult time.



Father Rene Guesnier, O.S.B.

"I loved those first few years in the abbey. I loved the example of the Benedictine monks and the abbey's dedication to the celebration of the Divine Office and the sacred liturgy."

The glory days at the abbey were my days before Vatican II and the chaos that followed still leaves me bewildered. So many of my professors left the abbey. So many changes took place. I tried to adjust but deep down in my soul I just didn't think that what I was doing was right. I went along and still do. Being obedient is the most difficult challenge.

SKR: What have been your greatest joys?

Father Rene: My joys were the early years at the abbey and being able once again to offer the "old Latin Mass." How beautiful it is! Knowing that Jesus and our blessed Mother love me.

SKR: What kind of ministries have you been/are you involved in?

Father Rene: I have served at the abbey in various jobs. I spent over 20 years in the Army. The

rest of the years were in parochial work.

SKR: Please offer a quote that makes a statement about the value of religious life for you.

Father Rene: I really have two. 1) "Obedience trumps everything." 2) When things get tough, St. Paul reminds me, "To live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given Himself up for me." (Galatians)



CSJ Mission Trip to Greensburg, KS Summer 2008

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For more information about becoming a sister, associate or volunteer with the Sisters of St. Joseph contact:

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