

# Women and Education

By S. JUDITH METZ

By the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century formal education for women began to receive serious consideration in American society. As young ladies' academies opened they became the standard bearers of a new era of opportunity for girls. Most offered a combination of

academic subjects along with traditional emphasis on the "polite arts." At the same time some established grammar schools and common schools began to open their doors to girls.

It was in the 1820s, however, that girls' schools recognized on the regional and national level

*During the 150th anniversary year each issue of Intercom will focus on a particular ministry or cultural area, highlighting Sisters who were pioneers in the field, and some who continue their rich history of caring and excellence.*

emerged. Educational leaders such as Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher and Mary Lyons founded female seminaries, authored textbooks, and promoted the cause

of women's education. The schools they founded were forerunners of higher education for women. Like so much else in American society at the time, however, their schools were sectarian in nature and saw at least part of their purpose as promoting a Protestant culture. The same could be said for the public school system that emerged in many parts of the country during the ante-bellum period.

The Catholic Church also valued education for girls, as evidenced by

Bishop John Carroll's encouragement of Elizabeth Seton to open a school in Baltimore as early as 1808. Within a few short years Elizabeth and her fellow Sisters of Charity established a day school, a class for orphans, and an academy for girls at St. Joseph's in Emmitsburg, Md.

As additional congregations of women religious became established, Catholic girls' schools and academies spread throughout the country. As the number of Catholics increased dramatically through each decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the parish school system, staffed mainly by women religious, became the mainstay of Catholic education. In Cincinnati the Sisters of Charity educated over 300 girls per year by mid-century. After their establishment as a diocesan congregation in 1852 they immediately expanded their educational work both in Cincinnati and beyond.

## The Pioneers

### S. Regina Mattingly

We think of her as a pioneer Sister of Charity, Mother and administrator, but in her heart of hearts

S. Regina Mattingly was an educator. Although she served briefly in other schools, from 1850 until the end of her life she was closely associated with Mount St. Vincent, Cedar Grove. Even when she was

serving as Mother of the Congregation, she resided there and took an active interest in the education of the students. Taking great pride in

the 700-volume library, she recorded in her journal that one day she had the "delightful occupation" of arranging the holdings. "I love to handle books," she reported.

During her terms as Mother she actively pursued opportunities for the Sisters to receive education in order to enhance their work as teachers or nurses. She arranged for professors from Mount St. Mary's of the West to provide classical and scientific courses far beyond the normal curriculum for women. She insisted that the best preparation possible was owed to the children awaiting the Sisters' instruction.

While visiting the Sisters on the missions she always enjoyed her

time in the school interacting with the students. Considering parochial education extremely important, she supported the Sisters in the classrooms and championed them when she felt they were not supported by pastors. In all her years, a great deal of her energy was directed toward education.

### S. Eveline Dee

From her earliest days in the Community, S. Eveline Dee distinguished herself as an excellent teacher and a leader in education. She was held in high esteem for her outstanding skill in the classroom, as well as



the initiative and guidance she offered in her administrative roles.

Entering the Community in 1880, Sister served in various schools before being appointed the first director of Mount St. Joseph Academy in 1906. Holding this post for eight years, S. Eveline built a reputation for the academy as a fine educational institution. With her stately bearing and dignified manner, she provided a model for the students under her charge.

After spending 1914-1915 at Catholic University finishing her degree in philosophy and psychology, this seasoned educator began a year of testing and experimentation with the Shields Method of Reading. The following year she was invited by Dr. William Kane, superintendent of schools in the Diocese of Cleveland, to give lectures on child psychology to all the Sisters of the diocese.

Sister then returned to Mount St. Joseph Academy for another six years, during which she was involved with preparations for the opening of the College of Mount St. Joseph. S. Eveline was one of the first Sisters of Charity to begin work on a master's degree, which she did in 1919 at the University of Notre Dame. When she finished this degree S. Eveline joined the faculty of the College of Mount St. Joseph for what would be a 15-year tenure. Through her 46 years as an educator, she earned a high level of respect and gratitude.

### **S. Mary Janet Miller**

When S. Mary Janet was appointed principal of Cathedral High School in Denver in 1939 she had already

established a reputation for being a "good school woman." It was here



that she had the opportunity to implement some of her innovative ideas on education. In addition, she established warm relationships with the students as she encouraged them to

mature into educated Christian adults. One student recalled her as exuding "wisdom and tolerance and good will shining out of her mind through her twinkling eyes."

Beginning in 1945 S. Mary Janet established a long working relationship with educators at Catholic University, first as a doctoral student, later as a faculty member. At the same time she worked with the Commission on American Citizenship, where she was charged with developing a curriculum for Catholic secondary schools that included an emphasis on social action and citizenship responsibilities. Through her studies, publications and lectures S. Mary Janet became known as one of the foremost educators in the country.

Although from 1959 on S. Mary Janet spent most of her years in Congregational leadership positions, she never stopped being an educator. She seized every opportunity to be active in adult education through roles with the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, the Cincinnati Interracial Commission, the Cincinnati Archdiocesan Catholic Commission on Human Relations, and other agencies.

### **S. Bernadette Haley**

S. Bernadette Haley was not only an excellent teacher but was gifted

with the ability to nurture other teachers' talents as well.

After serving as principal at several schools, S. Bernadette was appointed Community supervisor of elementary schools in 1955. Teachers generally agreed that she was the "perfect" supervisor - enthusiastic about teaching, encouraging and with many creative tips to share. "She could tell you what you were doing wrong in such a positive way," remarked one former teacher. Recognizing the importance of cross-pollination, S. Bernadette collected teaching ideas, helpful hints, and useful techniques that she sent to classroom teachers under the title "Memo Jets."

S. Bernadette's next position was head of the elementary education department at the College of Mount St. Joseph. Here too her warm and cheerful demeanor, her dedication to education, and her rich background combined to enable her to provide meaningful instruction and experiences for future teachers. During the 1960s she also served as a textbook consultant and a member of the Archdiocesan school board. She generously served on many committees and shared her expertise through workshops and programs.

By the early 1970s S. Bernadette was working in the college Reading Clinic. Even after her retirement Sister taped books for students and tutored young children. Never losing her enthusiasm for teaching, she remained a role model and friend to many of her former students and supervisees.



### The Followers

#### S. Barbara Davis

Recently the principals of both the elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, gathered for our annual leadership

institute. During that gathering we received a listing of all the principals with their years of ministry in Catholic education. I was struck by the fact that of the 88 elementary principals, I have the third highest number of years in the

ministry of Catholic education — 39! Sometimes it is hard for me to believe that I have been engaged in this ministry for that many years. Of course, I began teaching when I was 12!!!!

I have always been grateful for the gift of my ministry, and I truly believe that God has graced my life as I have ministered beside so many people who are dedicated to their faith and to the sacred trust we share as we strive to model Jesus, the greatest teacher. Circumstances have changed over these 39 years, but I believe that each child and each family I minister to are God's presence in my life.

"Let the children come to me." These words of Jesus continue to inspire and sustain me each day.

#### S. Jeanine Marie Holthouse

Teaching has been my goal in life since the sixth grade. My grandfather and my mother were teachers, and I was blessed with a wonderful, caring sixth-grade teacher. These three were my role models.

I went to the College of Mount St. Joseph and majored in physical

education. After graduation I entered the Sisters of Charity and during my postulant year I taught seventh grade at Resurrection. This class was the best in everything.

After the novitiate I was missioned to St. Brigid High School, Xenia, Ohio. There were only four high school teachers, so we taught everything. After two years I was missioned to Shrine High School, Royal Oak, Mich. Two years later I was sent to Cathedral High School, Denver, Colo. What followed was nine years of wonderful Sisters, great students and beautiful mountains!

In 1969 I was missioned to Elizabeth Seton High School, South Holland, Ill. I have so many wonderful memories of this time and so many lifelong friends.

In 1982 I asked to come to Seton High School, Cincinnati, and have been here ever since. I am presently teaching juniors and seniors, as well as tutoring upperclassmen. I work closely with our Moms and Dads club and am freshman class moderator. I love Seton and hope and pray I stay here until I retire. Education builds our future and I am proud to be a part of it.

#### S. Marge Kloos

As a professor of religious and pastoral studies, I teach at the College of Mount St. Joseph. In the undergraduate religious studies program, I teach students of many denominations who are preparing to enter some area of ministry. Graduate students are preparing to

minister in pastoral care.

As a pastoral care theologian I study and teach about the struggles of and opportunities for wholeness as part of the Christian experience. Pastoral care theology is concerned with attending to the immediate needs of individuals as part of the Christian belief that to love another is to love God. Among pastoral care theologians there is a growing interest in how social systems, such as education, health care, family and economics, support wellness. The focus in this discipline of theology is clearly on the immanence of God and how God's presence provides compassionate caring for the needs of earthlings.

In this ministry I have the opportunity to instruct about and engage in transformative pastoral care strategies that move beyond the focus of individual care. For instance, at the U.S./Mexico border where I have the privilege to travel with students each year, the lessons of pastoral care theology are rich. Consumerism, self-interested human development, and environmental racism collide with the yearning for access to resources. Wholistic solutions to these injustices become the focus of pastoral care studies.

#### S. Anita Parks

Seventeen years ago I had the opportunity to start the preschool at St. Mary School, Marion, Ohio. Seven years later I came to St. Martha School in Okemos, Mich., my present location, where I further developed my ministry.

As I put together my own



curriculum I began to realize the need for children to be steeped in an awareness of the wonders of God's creation. Therefore, I selected stories, activities and outdoor experiences that would focus on the gifts and changes of nature.

Children also need to be guided in ways to care for the Earth. One activity is a little play about having a picnic in the park. The "park" is closed due to trash and debris, so the children get involved in cleaning it up.

St. Martha's property is surrounded by beautiful grounds with a small children's garden and bordered by a woods that gives a changing view of nature.

As I work with the children, who are three, four and five years old, I have prayed that I would continue to reach into my potential and creativity, while planting seeds of appreciation and wonder in the children and in myself. God's grace continues to work in me.

### S. Katharine Pinto

The simplest and commonest truth or learning seems new and wonderful when we experience it for the first time. All 31 years of my teaching ministry have been with young children, 27 of those years in kindergarten. Pride and excitement are often etched on the faces of my students when they learn to tie a shoe, print their names, speak in Spanish, deliver a message to the office, open a milk carton independently, and a multitude of other things that, as adults, we often take for granted. Their simple

faith and curiosity about things spiritual as well as the world around them provide fertile ground for passing on values.

The curriculum has changed through the years and it seems that the children are expected to learn more and more in kindergarten. I have been challenged to adapt to and learn new techniques and strategies through the years as the curriculum and society have changed. Teaching, for me, requires a lot of patience, energy and planning to stay one step ahead of the children and to meet all their various individual needs.

### S. Mary Alice Stein

For 40 years I have been teaching, something I never thought about doing while in high school. At times it is challenging!

Over the years I have taught a variety of English classes. Currently, I teach junior honors English, senior writing classes, and Latin IV.

For the past seven years I have been the music director for such plays as *Oklahoma*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Music Man*. Next spring we plan to stage *The Sound of Music*. I also participate in the choir for all school liturgies.

Carroll High School, Dayton, is currently stressing "The Year of Life," emphasizing the gift of life. As a member of the Life Committee I help plan assemblies centered on



such issues as cloning and care of the elderly.

At times I feel like a "voice in the wilderness," being the last religious on the faculty. (There were 32 Sisters and 10 priests when I first arrived at Carroll.) However, I pray God will continue to grant me the health and stamina to witness the Sisters of Charity charism to the staff and students.

### S. Rose Therese Wich

Saint John's tenth chapter on the Good Shepherd has been the voice from within that has inspired me to be an educator and to minister to God's children. Shepherding the flock began in September 1946 when I walked into the fifth grade classroom of 62 children at Holy Trinity School in Trinidad, Colo. It

was love at first sight. I felt like S. Blandina Segale, full of zeal and determination, and for the next 26 years I taught all of the grades.

I moved into administration in the early '70s. I'm now in my 30<sup>th</sup> year of principalship. At present I'm at Our Lady of Annunciation School in Albuquerque, N.M., shepherding 440 children and working on accreditation, technology and innovative programs, always striving for a Catholic identity.

Even though education may have changed over the years, the needs of children will never change. They need to be loved and to be trained; they will always need a shepherd. What a great privilege we have as Sisters of Charity to have been or continue to be in the ministry of education.

