

How I Became Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

By Sister Mary Dominica Amesse, PBVM

My story begins when I was 4 years old, my mother died leaving ten children to the care of our loving grandparents. Because of circumstances a decision was made for us to be placed in the care of St. Colmans Orphanage, a home for boys and girls where the children of a family could be kept together.



I can honestly say that my days as a child at St. Colman's were happy days. The sisters would wake us up and we would begin our day with morning prayer. We then had the option to attend Mass with the sisters or stay with the other children and another sister until breakfast. My choice was always to go to Mass. Truly I believe this was when the seed for my vocation was planted, that set my goal for life, to be a sister.

After breakfast, those of us who had charges (this is what we called our jobs) would report to duty and work side by side, with the sisters until the school bell rang. Working on our charges were happy times for us. We would work learning all the necessary skills to become successful adults later in life. The bell rings and it's off to school! My favorite subject was Religion. Sister Mary Peter and Sister Mary Assumption were my role models. Their love for Jesus, Mary and Joseph showed forth in their love for all us children. We worked hard in school and then before we knew it, three o'clock came and school was out, time to play!

The years flew by and then I was on my way to high school. Catholic Central High School in Troy was my choice. At first a little intimidating, but soon making new friends and meeting the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy, this led to learning becoming a most enjoyable challenge.

I fully entered into the social life of high school. We went to sport games, joined school clubs and attend dances. Proms too, were a big part of high school and we always looked forward to them with great expectation.

June 1955 came and my days at C.C.H.S. ended. After my graduation I spent a few days with my family, after that we all drove to St. Colman's where I officially entered the Sisters of the Presentation as a postulant. Now I got to see what the convent side of St. Colman's was like.

Mother Virginia was our Mistress of Novices and with her love and prayers she guided us through our postulancy and novitiate years. A "Call" to join the Sisters of the Presentation means for one to become a woman of contemplation, living in community, united in charity, joyfully and generously serving God and His people. Remaining faithful to our foundress, Nano Nagle, we professed the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience - in addition we take a fourth vow, to participate in the charitable instruction of poor children.

Our days begin with morning prayers, meditation and Mass. After breakfast the time was filled with community charges, Novitiate exercises and College courses. I am very proud to say that I am a graduate of both Siena and Russell Sage where I received my graduate degree in Elementary Education.

After being professed I started my religious life teaching 3rd grade right here at St. Colman's. Thus, began over fifty years of teaching: I have had the happy experience of teaching every class from kindergarten through 8th Grade. An added gift for me was teaching CCD. Preparing the students for the Sacraments, which I considered to be a very special privilege. I was now fulfilling Nano Nagle's first objective: "The one necessary thing - to teach the children about God".

I'm "retired" now, but my life here goes on, I am as busy as ever. If anyone needs help they know they can always call on me. What really keeps me busy? First of all, I'm privileged to be a part of our Liturgical Team as a Lector and Eucharistic Minister.

Throughout the day, my main job involves the Residence we have here at St. Colman's for Autistic children who attend our school. I take pride in keeping their living area neat and tidy, just like having your own home, except our "home" is a little bigger than most. This job also entails setting out clothes for the children each day, packing them for their home visits and sometimes I even get to play with them. I am just as happy now as when I first entered St. Colman's. With the grace of God, I will continue to fulfill Nano Nagle's spiritual advice to her daughters, "Not words-but-Deeds."