

Sister Mary Ellen O'Connell

“ . . . offering a supportive, caring presence; experiencing the richness of people’s lives; sharing in their journeys of deepening spirituality. . . ”



Sister Mary Ellen O’Connell always knew that she wanted to become a teacher! Growing up in Roslindale, she attended Sacred Heart School and Fontbonne Academy. She recalls enjoying time spent at school and becoming involved in school activities. As her parents were teachers, the choice was obvious!

During those years, experiencing the commitment of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the seeds of her vocation was sown. Entrance into the Novitiate was a natural progression. She respected and admired the sisters and was drawn to their ministry. She even had an inkling about religious life as her brother Kevin had entered the Jesuits.

After earning her bachelor’s degree in mathematics, Sister Mary Ellen began her teaching career at St. Theresa School in West Roxbury. Busy days – teaching, coaching, volunteering with Girl Scouts, a master’s degree from Boston College, and a move to St. Mary High School, Brookline!

Years unfolded; new ministries emerged. She resolved, “My father was principal. I can be principal,” And she was at St. Catherine, Somerville, St. Gregory, Dorchester, and Charlestown Catholic! She recalls, “Although I truly enjoyed teaching, I absolutely loved being a principal – able to work with so many people, interacting with children, working with youthful, idealistic faculty, getting to know parents!” Ready for a change, Sister Mary Ellen returned briefly to the classroom, teaching math and science at St. Columbkille School and Archbishop Williams High School.

In 2000 Sister Mary Ellen was elected to the Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Joseph. She recalls, “As an area councilor, I experienced an active, growth-filled ministry. Being present to and interacting with sisters of many different ages and experiences, growing in understanding of those transitioning to new stages in their lives, encouraging sisters in their lives of service, and sharing in such varied experiences!”

After a brief “sabbatical” working with Jackson Walnut Park Schools, Sister Mary Ellen became Administrator at St. Joseph Hall in Framingham. However, the call to ministry emerged once again; in 2012, Sister Mary Ellen was invited to become Director of the CSJ Associates. She continues in this role today, doing work that she loves: “. . . offering a supportive, caring presence; experiencing the richness of people’s lives; sharing in their journeys of deepening spirituality; enhancing relationships with associates in New Mexico!”

Finding balance amidst the demands of her ministry, Sister Mary Ellen welcomes the tranquility of nature, the ocean, the mountains. Always ready to travel, she has visited Jordan, the Philippines, and Haiti. An athlete, she continues to enjoy sports. In quiet moments she tackles crossword and jigsaw puzzles.

Sister Mary Ellen reflects, “Not only have I been enriched by the people who have been a part of my life, the teachers, children, sisters, and associates, but my prayer has also been enriched by those relationships. My life enriched by those experiences! Those seeds, sown years ago, have been nurtured. Deeply rooted now, they bring fulfillment and joy as I live each day, striving always ‘. . . to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with God’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Micah 6:8

