

Sister Adela Rodriguez

***"I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead. I go straight for the goal..." Phil. 3:13***

This quotation has woven like a tapestry through Sister Adela Rodriguez' life since she first read it as a postulant. "This quote has always had so much meaning to me. When I first read it I was thinking, I'm leaving my family, my culture and my environment, and I'm coming to a new family, a new environment and a new culture." Now when she reflects upon it, "...during the pandemic where everything is changing, we [the sisters] are still leaving the past behind, still trusting in God, and we continue stretching our hands out to what is ahead."



Sister Adela was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to a large, extended family, many of whom were artists, painters, carvers, silversmiths, and craftsmen. Adela knew by fifth grade she wanted to be a sister, just like her teachers, the Sisters of St. Joseph. She came to Boston to join the Congregation in 1968, and after earning an AB in History from Regis College, began her first ministry teaching at St. Williams in Dorchester. Soon after, Adela received an invitation to go back to Santa Fe to teach Math and Science at Cristo Rey Elementary School. She was living close to her family again, even able to see her parent's home across the fields from the school's window.

After several years, Sister Adela received encouragement to apply to art school and was awarded a Presidential Scholarship to study art at Regis College. While a senior at Regis, she experienced the first attack of what would later come to be diagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis. "Throughout the years, different things happened, and I would go to the doctors, and they could not figure out what was wrong. It wasn't until 1990 that I finally got diagnosed with MS. Many people have MS and don't know they have it." At the time of her diagnosis, Sister Adela was teaching at Holy Name Parish School in West Roxbury. As her MS progressed, she came to Bethany Health Center for treatment then moved to St. Joseph Hall, where she has since resided and works in her art studio there.



In 1991, Regis hosted a workshop of all CSJ federation artists, and Sister Adela took a class demonstrating how to do glass etchings. She was soon doing etchings from her studio. The next year The Ministry of the Arts in LaGrange, IL, decided to create a catalog, which would represent artwork from all CSSJs. Sister Adela's work was accepted as one of two representatives from Boston. In all, she has made 3,789 etchings thus far in her career. As she works, she offers prayers for those who will receive the etchings. Sister Adela's etchings can be found all over the world in private collections, in CSJ motherhouses, in the Le Puy Archives, France, and the Heritage Center in Lyon, France. They can be found in many forms, including wedding invitations and on the stems of wine glasses. She also designed a lovely silver cross with a Southwestern flavor, sketched while she was a postulant, which can be worn as a brooch or pendant. This cross was often admired and requested by other sisters, and it has since come to be identified with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston.



Sister Adela currently lives with constant pain in her legs and knows her MS is progressing. However, she is reaching forward in life, bringing great joy to others through her art, praying for the recipient of each piece she designs, learning new computer programs and techniques, meeting every challenge head-on with practicality and persistence. She has often said, "God is having a great laugh because I'm a very logical person, and MS is a very illogical disease."