

Sister Jean Mulloy

"I've had wonderful experiences, all growing ones. You don't know you're growing, but you're being pulled, and you're hurting many times, but I think I became a better person because of things that happened in my life that made me more flexible, more open to change." S. Jean Mulloy



Sister Jean Mulloy was pulled in a creative direction beginning in childhood, surrounded by wonderful music, shared stories, and joyful laughter. Her parents were excellent musicians, and her Benedictine uncle and Benedictine aunt sang beautiful Gregorian chant. They made sure their vacations coincided so they could stay at her parent's home and join together with her parents and siblings in joyful celebrations filled with song, banjo, guitar, and piano. This creativity and love of storytelling was what she carried throughout her life. On first encountering the Sisters of St. Joseph at Immaculate Conception School in Everett, Jean saw them as very kind, strict, and good teachers, but it was their sense of humor that most appealed to her.

As a senior in high school, Sister Jean began to seriously think about entering the Sisters and asked her 8th-grade teacher to sponsor her. Joining with other young women right out of high school, she remembers "we had so much laughter over everything, and it was that sociability that got us through. You made wonderful friends, and there was a real sense of togetherness."

Sister Jean's background has been in Education, Counseling, Pastoral Ministry, and Music. Teaching in several schools throughout the diocese for over 20 years, she taught all subjects but also emphasized music and put on mini-shows and plays with the children. At the time she was teaching high school in the South End, there was great unrest and racial tension in Boston, and she recalls an important and life-changing event that occurred during that time period.

On the journey to Virginia with her father, mother, and another sister to celebrate her brother Tom's final vows as a Xaverian Brother, they stopped at a restaurant. As they entered, all eyes turned to them, and it became silent. The hostess called the manager, who told them, "your kind are not welcome here." It was a shocking experience. They were in full habit, and at that time, the Catholic Church was very supportive of the black community being admitted into all educational opportunities. The experience of rejection was one Sister Jean has never forgotten. It stretched her and helped her become open to others' experiences of racism, rejection, and fear. These lessons helped her in her work in the South End and later in Roxbury at St. Mary of the Angels Parish, where she listened to the advice of a parishioner who told her: "Sister, be smart, sit back and listen. They'll tell you what they need."

Another growth experience for Sister Jean was working at Cardinal Cushing School for Special Needs as a pastoral minister. For 20 years, she developed a program that spread to several campuses in many locations serving children and adults and creating residential houses. "That was a wonderful experience learning what special needs are all about, what the challenges are, and what the parents go through." After this experience, Sister Jean helped run a transportation program for the town of Waltham called Faith in Action and, after a few years, went on to become Director of Chaplaincies at the Franciscan Hospital for Children.

Currently, Sister Jean coordinates the Transportation Program for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston. Seeing a need and filling it, 30 volunteer drivers make approximately 35 to 50 trips a month, helping the sisters attend doctor appointments and visiting family as far away as Vermont or Cape Cod, thus helping sisters remain independent and connected with the community.

Sister Jean reflects on the current crises we are experiencing:

"These are overwhelming times, very trying times, and I always go back to this saying, 'And what does God require of you? To act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:8). What can one do but love tenderly and do not be afraid, think about what really matters and open ourselves up to love."