



Sister Peggy Quinn (right) and Sister Jean Okroi, IBVM, were at the recent Bluestem Earth Festival in Joliet

Meet My Ministry - Sr. Peggy Quinn

As I started many times to put into words the description and the meaning of my present ministry, I realized that I wanted to weave together the past, present and future in some way. When I attended a meeting for vocations recently, I was inspired by our theme: Weaving Our Future. Everything about the theme gave me food for thought in terms of my ministry.

The past ministries are present in the ministry I do now; they are a part of the story. They are a part of the fabric of how I do and what I do now and why. The people with whom and for whom I minister all have a place in the tapestry. So while I may not be crafty with the making of a tapestry, it becomes obvious to me that my life in ministry is about creativity, actual weaving, finding ways to share the Gospel by weaving together the opportunities to use my gifts, my time, along with those I meet each day, to do my part to build the Kingdom.

My present ministries developed in this same way, by answering what was mine to do. Each part of the past 40 years of ministry are still a part of who I am

now...always developing, but in another way, always the same. Everything is about living and sharing the Gospel message of love and healing and justice for all people.

I started out as a teacher of theology and that piece keeps coming back. Even as I studied theology in college, though, I was attracted to working with the poor and it led me to missionary work in the mountains of Appalachia in Kentucky. It was there I developed my teaching skills in new forms. I developed my theology to incorporate God's love for the poor. I taught GED, bible school, religious education, and assisted with outreach to the poor.

It was in Kentucky that I met the Joliet Franciscans and felt called to move from Kentucky to Illinois, to look into the community option for my life, but the love for the poor and the mountains didn't get left behind. As I moved back into formal teaching in Illinois, I was led back into ministry with the poor in a new way, sharing that love with high school students as Campus Minister. We developed a very busy ministry at our school,

St. Francis Academy. I did this for 20 years including the years of transition from a girls' school into a coed Joliet Catholic Academy and another 8 years in Colorado as Campus Minister. I was using theology and justice outreach to develop a way to make gospel living viable in the lives of the students and faculty. Always teaching the Gospel through actions and prayer. We were involved in numerous outreach programs including many mini-missionary trips, most of them back in the mountains of Kentucky. All of those experiences are a part of my present ministry; I kept learning and making connections. Opportunity to be creative in prayer and liturgy enhanced and gave meaning and helped us celebrate all we did.



Sister Peggy is also a local coordinator for the Congregation. She is pictured here with Sister Carol Jander who is a 60th Jubilarian.

Returning to Joliet I began to use the same skills in ministry within the Congregation as Councilor for Franciscan Spirituality. In some ways beyond the administrative responsibilities, it was similar to being a Campus Minister. So the journey continued and grew and stayed the same.

So what creativity am I engaged in now? It is three fold: vocation ministry, justice outreach and community service. In vocation ministry I travel to high schools, grade schools, parishes and youth events and make contacts through email and various events in order to allow people to meet Sisters, to ask questions and to discern their own call in life. It involves working with our Congregation Vocation Team, collaborating with the Joliet Area Vocation Association and the Chicago Vocation Association, and collaborating at times with other Franciscan Congregations. I see my goal as sharing our mission and the Franciscan life. One of the most exciting experiences was attending and cohosting an exhibit at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. Over 20,000 young people were present for those three days. Throughout those days we met and talked to all kinds of youth and adult chaperones and got to work with them in outreach projects. It gave me hope for our Church and I met young people who are considering religious life. We are always seeking creative ways to meet and assist others to answer their call.

Another large part of my outreach is as member of committees for justice at the congregation, county, state and national level. Illinois Women Religious Against

Human Trafficking focuses on Prevention, Protection, Prosecution in cases of Human Trafficking. We've hosted 2 major conferences; we've held numerous prayer and movie discussion nights around the Chicago and Joliet areas; we began a very useful website (www.stophumantraffickingil.org) and a Facebook page. We work to keep up on legislation that can make a difference and we distribute resources throughout Illinois. I am a representative from this group with the US Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking and a member of our Congregation's Human Trafficking and Immigration Committee, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission and our Bluestem Earth Festival core planning team. In our own Will County I take part in the Will County Coalition Against Child Pornography and Exploitation. I've been given opportunities to speak on the topic of Human Trafficking. All of these committees bring people together to make a difference. A third area of ministry is service to and with members of the Congregation. This has taken the form of facilitating a local chapter group of Sisters and assisting them in any way they may need along with prayer services, transportation and music.

In these three main areas of ministry, the past has called me to "find what is mine to do" and then do it. These allow me to share the Good News in my little way and I pray into the future.