



In Joyful Service

Sister Jan Of The Presentation Sisters
Is Always Serving

By S.J. Menning

Sisters of Service: Sisters at L.I.V.E. (Leading Individuals Voicings Equality) Leadership Camp. (Left to Right) Sister Myra Remily, Sister Jan Mengenhauser, Sister Lynn Marie Welbig and Sister Gabriella Crowley

“

want to know that kind of God,” thought Sister Janice Mengenhauser.

It was 1955. At the time, Sister Jan wasn’t a sister. She was a nursing student in Aberdeen. She loved school and was very active, serving as student body president. And she loved God. But then she read Thomas Merton’s “The Seven Storey Mountain,” and it profoundly changed her life.

“In his book, Merton portrays God in a very caring way,” Sister Jan says. “I just felt so drawn to that.” Sister Jan put her nursing education on hold and entered the Presentation Sisters’ convent in Aberdeen during a blizzard on Feb. 1, 1956.



Sister Janice Mengenhauser.

Today, there are more than 2,000 Presentation Sisters worldwide. Sister Jan is one of 70 who represent the Presentation Sisters in Aberdeen. As the Aberdeen Presentation Sisters celebrates its 130th year of service, the sisters hold true to their mission to willingly go forth to any part of the world to work for justice, alleviate oppression, and promote human dignity – especially among the poor.

“The sisters are a collection of so many amazing and fearless women doing such incredible work,” says Brooke Nicholson Grote, communication and development director for the Presentation Sisters. “Each sister is so humble, dedicated and helpful to so many people in need.”

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~ Brooke Nicholson Grote,
Communication and Development
Director for the Presentation Sisters

From helping local families with utility bills and hosting camps for regional youth, to assisting after natural disasters and teaching the benefits of organic farming to villagers in Zambia – the Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen say “yes” to service.

Fulfilling her love of learning, Sister Jan went on to obtain her nursing degree from the Presentation Sisters’ School of Nursing in Aberdeen. She earned her bachelor’s degree in Nursing from St. Louis University, and her master’s degree in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University.

And she epitomizes saying “yes” in joyful service.

With only a four-month crash course in Spanish, Sister Jan traveled to Chiapas, Mexico, in 1967. She served as a nurse for eight years. “We dealt with a lot of cases of tuberculosis, and women dying during childbirth was all too common,” Sister Jan shares. In 1976, she returned to the United States and later went on to serve in Omaha for 25 years, working with Latino couples and families, and becoming a licensed professional counselor.

Today, Sister Jan serves on the Bishop Dudley House board of directors and practices as a bilingual counselor at Caminando Juntos through Catholic Family Services, where she offers counseling to Latinos facing serious life situations.

Sister Jan says she is looking forward to visiting Ireland this summer, where Presentation Sisters foundress Nano Nagle spent her life serving the poor. “I will be going to reflect on who Nano Nagle was, and how I can grow in carrying on her mission!”

To learn more about the work of the Presentation Sisters, visit www.presentationisters.org.