

PASTORAL MINISTRY IN LABELLE, FLORIDA, 1983- 2000

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THE CALL TO FLORIDA: I had been working at Regis in St. Charles with our retired Religious when I tried once again to follow my desire for the missions. Having missed the opportunity for Japan, then for Africa (since I was already retired) Barb Dawson suggested that I consider the missions in the United States. While spending four weeks in Indiantown working with 10 RSCJs in their summer youth program and teaching English to the Guatemalans, we were housed in the Housing and Urban Development for migrant farmworkers. While there I visited the LaBelle community for three days, and that convinced me that I belonged where I was needed! The simple surroundings, the simple life-style and the opportunity to become involved in the parish of Our Lady Queen of Heaven as Director of Religious Education appealed to my teaching background. Since 1938 I have taught every class from kindergarten to evening college classes, so it seemed natural to return to the classroom. Until 1995 the future of us: Rosa Maria Orjuela, Bienvenida Velez and Mercedes Posada and I worked together, until Muriel Cameron joined us the following year.

Because of the steady growth of both Anglo and Hispanic populations continued to grow in Hendry County the Diocese of Venice (at the same time as Palm Beach) and the Gulf Coast continues to fill up.

Indiantown community continued, was still active in 1986 and I was asked to be Area Coordinator for Indiantown/LaBelle since we were both in Parish work and Miami was only school until 1990. Slightly hampered by an angioplasty, I began to slow down slightly, but was asked by the Diocese to be Coordinator for the Venice Pastoral Institute until its completion in 1986-1992. Then it became The Blessed Edmund Rice Institute for the diaconate training.

All during this time I remained active in the Council of Catholic Women, Volunteer in the Hope Hospice organization, visiting cancer patients in Hendry County, helping to initiate the Literacy Council in LaBelle, teaching English to migrants who were trying to get necessary certification, visiting the Nursing Home at Oakbrook as Eucharistic Minister, and maintaining the Church sacristy and service lists. In honor of fifty years since entrance, after celebrating with other religious in the diocese, I had the joy of spending four months in the Holy Land, studying at the Notre Dame de Sion Convent in old Jerusalem and visiting two weeks in Rome just prior to the canonization of Saint Philippine. Dianne Lovett, Director of Religion at Bishop Verot Highschool was good enough to act as DRE while I was away, so nothing suffered.

After a trip to Mexico in the summer of 1991 by having double by-pass surgery in Miami. Father Larry Faeth replaced me as DRE, thinking that my days of usefulness were over. The only difference it made was in switching jobs with my replacement: Joan Cavanaugh steered the teachers and meetings and I became her secretary! ~~The~~ when Joan died of cancer Patty Register continued the good work until Sister Muriel Cameron came in 1995 to take over both anglo and hispanic classes.

From 1994-1999 one of my very enjoyable pasttimes was Line Dancing at the Senior Center, or else utilizing the swimming pool and jacuzzi across the way at LaBelle Woods during the summer months. Somehow my yoga and mile walks each day became harder to continue!

Spiritually, the location of my retreats each year proved to make a tremendous impression on me, and particularly the celebration of my Golden Jubilee in 1996, and my Diamond Jubilee in 2000. I am attaching a list of sites and directors that strongly influenced my outlook, the most spectacular being my stay at Joigny, September 2000 and the alumnae tour "In the Footsteps of St. Madeleine Sophie". All this followed by The biography of Sophie by Phil Kilroy.