

In Conversation with Sister Roseanne Murphy

Educator. Nurse. Ph.D. World Traveler. Administrator. Fundraiser. Lecturer. Trailblazer. Woman of Faith. Tour Guide. Author. **Sr. Roseanne Murphy, SNDdeN**, has packed a lot into her 90 years, and we are delighted to have the opportunity to celebrate this milestone birthday in her honor this Saturday.

Career Highlights: Sr. Roseanne earned an RN from St. Joseph's College of Nursing. She holds a BA from Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles, an MS from Stanford and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. Her first teaching position was at her alma mater, Notre Dame High School, where she taught biology, general science, religion and English. Later she found her "true teaching home" at the College of Notre Dame, now Notre Dame de Namur University.

During her 50-year tenure with the university, Sr. Roseanne chaired the Department of Sociology and Psychology for 37 years, where she facilitated the development of master's degrees in art therapy and clinical psychology. In 1970, she developed the "Rome 70 Program," a semester abroad attended by 32 students. She, along with Fr. Xavier Harris, OFM, planned and escorted six pilgrimages, including two to the Holy Land, and one each to Oberammergau, Assisi, Lourdes and Santiago de Compostela.

A true trailblazer, Sr. Roseanne was the first woman to be invited to teach at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park and taught a class in formal organizations at the University of San Francisco. Following her retirement from teaching in 2000, she became the director of alumni relations and later for the planned giving program, and also served as special assistant to the president for development at NDNU.

Sr. Roseanne was the recipient of two National Endowment of the Humanities Summer Fellowship Grants, was a Danforth Scholar and a sought-after lecturer. She is the author of *Julie Billiard: Woman of Courage*, a biography of the foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and was asked to write the story of Sr. Dorothy Stang, who was murdered in Brazil in 2005. *Martyr of the Amazon: The Life of Sr. Dorothy Stang* has been translated into three languages.

We recently sat down with Sr. Roseanne to learn more about the remarkable person behind these many accomplishments.

What were your early days like?

I was born and raised in the Bay Area. In the early days, my twin sister, brother and my parents lived in two local hotels managed by my father, the President Hotel in Palo Alto and the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in San Mateo. There were no Catholic schools in Palo Alto at the time so we attended St. Joseph's in Menlo Park and later, St. Matthews, run by the Sisters of the Holy Cross. My father went into the Navy just before my sister and I were about to enter eighth grade so we started boarding school at what is now Notre Dame High School here in Belmont. All in all, I was blessed with a very happy childhood.

Did you always know that you would enter religious life?

My sister wanted to be a stewardess which at the time required a nursing degree, and I was always drawn to nursing so the two of us attended St. Joseph's College of Nursing in San Francisco. As graduation neared, my plans were fairly traditional - joining the Navy after earning my nursing degree, going to school on the G.I. bill, getting married and starting a family. God apparently had other plans for me - calling me to religious life while I was still in nursing school. That was it. Then I had to make the

decision between a nursing or teaching order. Since I was always drawn to teaching and had grown up with the Sisters of Notre Dame, who were like family, I decided to go that route. And here I am, nearly 70 years later.

How did you become an author of two highly regarded books?

I gave a paper on Saint Julie for a conference in Namur, France in 1987. Afterwards I was asked to consider writing a book on her as the available literature at the time was written primarily for high school students. It took three years since I was still teaching and writing during the summer. It was grace for me, getting to know Saint Julie, and I came to love her even more. The reaction from the Sisters was wonderful; they loved the book and my story-telling writing style attracted the interest of the Provincial Team in Ohio, who then asked me to write a book about the life of Sister Dorothy Stang. That was quite an honor. Visiting Brazil and standing on the spot where Dorothy was murdered was a profoundly moving experience.

What makes someone a good teacher?

In addition to mastering the subject content and absolutely loving what you're teaching, you have to love your students and want to see them grow. That said, teaching requires infinite patience and respect for your students. My teaching career has been sprinkled with students grappling with their religious identity and values. While it may not have always seemed like it at the time, helping people find their way back to God has been such a gift.

Which Hallmarks resonate for you?

They are all so good and they all speak to me. That said, from the first Hallmark – *We proclaim by our lives even more than by our words that God is good* – the rest follow. The back of my cross is inscribed with the words, *How Good Is The Good God*. We are called upon to be sincerely forgiving, which takes courage and is not always easy.

What do you do for fun?

Right now I do a lot of reading, reflection and prayer. It's a very full life, for which I am most grateful.