



BVM Stories

Sister-Student Relationships Foster BVM Legacy

Students at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa, looked forward to spending an hour each week with “their” BVM sister during the past spring semester. Not only did they learn more of the history of the religious sisters who founded their university, but they made lifelong friends and were inspired to a greater awareness of life, purpose and spirituality.

After several meetings with sisters the students conducted video interviews that will be preserved in the BVM archives. You can view a snippet of each of these interviews as sisters share how they were “Open to the Call.”

Student/Sister Pairing: Stephanie Knipper and Joan Newhart, BVM (Joan Michael)



Student Reflection

This project has been one of the best experiences that I’ve had the honor of participating in. When I was first told about it I was unsure about going through with it. Projects and interviews like this have always been sort of a challenge for me, but I was fascinated with learning the BVM history since their congregation founded the university I attend.

Fortunately, my love for history and stories convinced me to accept. I’m not a social person and have often had trouble communicating with new people, so I was relieved to learn in the first meeting with “my sister” that she was just as nervous as I was.

Mary Joan Newhart and I found that we had much in common: our birthdays are only a day apart; we are both introverts; and we both can’t say “No” to things—so that is how we got together. During that first meeting, I realized this was more than a history project—that day I met an inspiration. Sister Joan and I connected on so many levels and it really helped me communicate with her from the beginning. Her personality and faith made me see things in a different light, just as I did the same with her.

The day of the first interview came and Sister Joan did a wonderful job and even slipped in a few of her jokes that made me smile because that is just her personality. I could listen to Sister Joan’s stories for hours and it was too bad we only met an hour once a week. When she tells her stories, when she talks about her faith, her

journey and challenges, and her love for education—she has a twinkle in her eye and that quality of hers is so special.

I loved every second of this project! Sister Joan helped me become inspired to explore and practice my faith, and I've learned to be more comfortable in communicating with new people. Learning about a sister's journey to explore her love of God and religion is more fascinating and beautiful than I imagined. I strongly recommend this project to anyone because it is more than a BVM history report; it is an inspiring friendship.

June 2016