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Ethan Doan

Sr. Marie Smith: The Franciscan Spirit

Abstract: In this paper, I will discuss my interview with Sister Marie Smith. Sister Marie is a member of a Franciscan order. She became sister in the late 1970's and took her final vows in 1985. Sister Marie spent part of her career as high school teacher in theology and then in campus ministries. This paper focuses on her call to become a Sister.

Coming into this interview, I was expecting to talk about her experience in education as a teacher. However, instead she told me about how she became a teacher because of her love for the poor. This love led her to her call to become a sister, which brought her to education and campus ministry. Growing up Sister Marie really never thought about becoming a sister. However, she did know that she wanted to work with the poor and the disadvantaged. She told me that she really wanted to work at an orphanage. She went to college and took this passion for the poor with her. She was training to become a teacher. During one of her breaks in college, she decided to go on a mission trip to Kentucky to work with the poor in their community. She loved being there. She then continued her education and taught for one year. After that year, she decided to stop teaching. She was not enjoying it. Sister Marie then returned to work in Kentucky for two years. The reason why was “ I was drawn to that life. The service seemed to be about accepting people and sharing the simple joys of life while trying to help people attain the basic needs of life.”

Her second time in Kentucky is where she really found her call to become a sister. This is because of the people she met. When in Kentucky, she was working with a group of Franciscan

sisters who stayed with her for a while. She really liked these sisters and they did a lot of work with each other. One day one of the sisters came up to her with tears in her eyes and said, “What have we done to stifle you so much? You are so alive with these Franciscans.” Sister Marie said she was not aware of this. After this conversation with this Franciscan sister, Sister Marie said she felt as if “some spirit of theirs had captured her.” After working in Kentucky for awhile, she decided to move near the congregation where those Franciscan sisters lived.

Sister Marie found a new sense of spirituality by working with the poor in Kentucky with three Franciscan sisters. This spirituality is what she called the “Franciscan spirit” and it shaped what she did in future as a Franciscan. She later went back into teaching and campus ministries. Sister Marie told me that the Franciscans believe that we must care for the earth, which also means care for all of God’s people. This is why the “Franciscan Spirit” caught her; because of her love and need to help the poor. Sister Marie told me that she believes that she has always had this “Franciscan Spirit” because she has always had this urge to help and show love to the poor. She told me that when she was a child she loved looking at the magazines that talked and portrayed the poor around the world and it touched her. She used to carry these magazines around the house all the time. She did not know at the time but this was the “Franciscan Spirit” in her. The only difference between then and now is that she had found this Spirit through working with the poor. She said to me, “I identify with the Franciscan Spirit and it is the thing that leads me.”

She is still sticking to this Franciscan mission of caring for God’s entire world. Sister Marie is now working in her congregation helping others find their call and helping them see if they are being called to become a sister. She believes that this Spirit affects everything she does in her life and she wants to help people find this Spirit.

Work Cited

“Sr. Marie Smith” Telephone interview by author. December 21, 2017.