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Sr. Nicole: Being a Teacher

Sierra Rood

Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois

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Sr. Nicole: Being a Teacher

Abstract: I interviewed with Sr. Nicole who spoke about her life experiences as a woman religious. This paper includes a portion of the interview where she spoke about her journey of becoming a woman religious and being a teacher.

My interview with Sister Nicole truly changed my perspective on the current education system in Catholic schools. She shared an amazing perspective about her journey as a teacher which is not usual for women religious teachers due to her late start into devoting her life to God. Typically, the view of women religious decreasing within the United States is seen as detrimental within the Catholic education system, especially since more lay people are teaching within Catholic schools. However, Sister Nicole has a different viewpoint about this topic which has impacted me greatly.

Throughout the course of American Catholicism, some discussion has focused on the impact on the Catholic education and how it has changed within the last few decades. Many of the in-class readings suggested that this change could directly impact the role of women religious as teachers since lay people are teaching in Catholic private institutions. This change could be seen as controversial as it would be impacting the education delivered within these schools. Does this change the philosophy of teaching within Catholic schools? Sister Nicole's insight from the interview conducted provided more insight on this change.

When I asked Sister Nicole the question about the field of education and how it is employing fewer women religious and more lay people, I asked what she believed to be negative

or positive changes along with this? Sister Nicole truly believes that the increase of more lay people as teachers is definitely more of a positive change than a negative one. This is because it allows for the coming into maturity and full involvement in the laity. She specifically said that, “for laity, as educated and committed as they were, this was a very positive development to have the Church and schools lead by lay people and sisters.” Although she wished there were more sisters involved in teaching, the laity are able to apply their individual gifts to education or to the Church. The laity is able to bring men and women to maturity to follow their own vocation within the Church while also recognizing their individual values and morals.

However, Sister Nicole specifically mentioned how even though lay women do not choose to devote their life to serving God, they are still serving God and ministries within their church. This is absolutely amazing due to the fact that she is seeing every individual person’s purpose, even if lay teachers are not devoting their life to devoting God like women religious. The laity has diverse amounts of purpose within education, just like women religious teachers. This prepares the laity to be mature within both their educational and spiritual roles in the Church like the sisters. It also displays that this is extremely beneficial as there are teachers still dedicating their career to teaching children within the Catholic schools. Even if there are less women religious in these roles, it does not necessarily mean that the philosophy will suffer due to this change.

This course has shown a diverse amount of feminist theology and how women religious courageously make the decision to live their life serving God. However, their teaching roles have impacted not only the spiritual world, but the realm of education too. This supports the fact that Sister Nicole would love to see more women religious within educational roles in the Catholic

schools, but does not necessarily see it as a negative change because people bring their own skill sets into each career and without this, there would be less uniqueness between teachers.

Another interesting aspect of the topic on education was how Vatican II changed these roles. Sister Nicole shared that Vatican II allowed more women religious to uphold more roles besides nursing and education, and this could also provide some explanation of why there was a decrease of women religious within education becoming employed. This is important to understand because before this interview, I theorized that the education in these schools were most likely suffering due to the lack of women religious teaching in these institutions.

This interview truly impacted me because of the open-mindedness Sister Nicole displayed throughout her answers. Even though she wished for an increase of women religious in this field, she truly saw past this and knew the values and skills every person offers in each career, regardless if they are a woman religious or a lay person. This taught me a lot and this was definitely one of the most impactful assignments I have ever completed within the three years of my college experience.

Works Cited

“Sr. Nicole.” Telephone interview by author. January 9, 2019.