



OFFERING COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE & CARE



By Mary Ann Kneeland ~ In 2004 I found myself moving home to Saint John, having spent the previous 34 years living and working in Toronto. I was wondering how I would manage this significant change, ending a long nursing career to which I had dedicated my life.

In September of that year I was attending a funeral for Sister Estelle Kennedy, a Sister of Charity of the Immaculate Conception (SCIC). It was here that I was reunited with Barb Hansen (now Stillman). I had known her for many years growing up in the same neighbourhood and attending the same schools. She explained she had become an SCIC Associate and was planning to attend a gathering of Associates that evening. I accepted her invitation to accompany her.

Associates are women and men who share the charism of charity with the SCIC in the Atlantic, Prairie and Pacific regions of Canada. The charism is a gift we have received from the Holy Spirit guiding our life and mission, focusing especially on those who are suffering and living in poverty.

My relationship with the Sisters had existed for many years. My aunt (the late Sister Catherine Kneeland) had been an SCIC and I was educated by the Sisters throughout my school years, including my nursing program at St. Joseph's Hospital in Saint John.

I began the Associate inquiry phase that fall and after completing it a year later, I took some time to discern how I would proceed along this journey. In January 2006, I made my first commitment as an SCIC Associate and have continued to renew it annually.

My faith has always been important to me. Having experienced two periods of serious illness, I always knew God was with me, as were my family and friends. Their prayer, love and support strengthened and guided me. The power of prayer is truly awesome.

In fall 2004, I went to Halifax, N.S. to care for my Aunt Margaret Kneeland who was in the final stages of cancer. I remained with her until she died in mid-December and often wonder if God brought me home to the east to accompany her.

Responding with Compassion

In my role as a nurse, the patients were my priority. Meeting the needs of each one and their families was my purpose. Later, I chose to express that sense of caring through volunteer ministries. For 10 years, I have visited elder Sisters at Ruth Ross Residence in Saint John. My experience there brings me great joy and a sense of gratitude.

Recently, I also became a volunteer at Hospice Greater Saint John (Bobby's Hospice) and love the time I am able to spend there among those who are sick and dying. I believe God has given me the gifts of caring, compassion and gentleness to share with those who are ill and in need.

I am a member of St. Alphonsus Parish in Hampton, N.B., where I offer hospitality ministry. I also belong to a small wisdom circle of Sisters and Associates which meets monthly for prayer and reflective conversation.

In September 2014 I joined the Atlantic Associate team and with other team members, plan gatherings and activities for Associates. We also prepare gatherings where both Sisters and Associates pray, socialize and reach out together to those in need in our community.

As an Associate of the SCIC, I have grown spiritually and while this spirituality was a part of my being for many years, I did not recognize it earlier. Through my relationship with the Associates and Sisters, I feel a spiritual energy. Experiencing this energy, I am able to be a presence to those in my life who are in need of support. *(Story by Mary Ann Kneeland ~ Photo by Sharon Jacquard)*