

Sister Stephanie Still



Sister Stephanie was born in 1952, in Oroville, California. Her family had moved from the San Francisco Bay Area so that her father could pursue his journalistic dream of working for a small newspaper. “My father spent his whole life working for newspapers in one way or another, starting as a newspaper delivery boy in the Depression and ending as a Managing Editor. I have spent many ministry years’ work in media relations in one way or another, and I believe these choices were influenced by father’s career choice.”

The family eventually returned to the Bay Area and settled in Albany. Sister Stephanie attended Saint Jerome Elementary School in El Cerrito; Presentation High School, Berkeley; and the University of California, Berkeley for her BA, Teaching Credential, and Masters degree.

Attending Presentation High school was seemingly inevitable: “My mother and aunt attended Saint Joseph’s Elementary School and Presentation High School, so at an early age I heard about the Presentation Sisters and met some of my mother’s high school teachers. My mother had even taken me as a baby to dedicate me to God at the chapel at the convent in Berkeley. (Apparently, this was a common occurrence for alumnae of the schools.) There was never any question about where I would go to high school.”

After completing her college work, Sister Stephanie returned to her alma mater, Presentation High School in Berkeley, to teach Social Studies. During that time, she began to seriously consider entering religious life.

Sister Stephanie reflected that “The decision to enter religious life is always a bit mysterious since it is founded in the call of the Holy Spirit. For a few years before I decided, I felt a desire for something more in my life. I had completed my education and wondered if being a professional teacher was enough. I had considered religious life off and on. The thought and discerning kept returning to me, which I interpreted as a sign of a desire placed within me by the Holy Spirit. So, I decided I needed to try and see if this was the life I was being called to. In many ways, I did not choose religious life, it chose me.”

Sister Stephanie never really considered another order. “The Presentation Sisters were a natural decision. I had come to know several of the Sisters quite well as teachers, mentors, and interesting women.” She entered the Sisters of the Presentation on September 8, 1981.

One of Sister Stephanie’s favorite quotes is from Nano Nagle: “Love one another as you have hitherto done.” It inspires her because it echoes Jesus’ words: “Love one another.”

And it speaks to her of community life. “Love is the basis for all our actions, ministries, living the charism – we start with a community based on love and witnessing to love, then we go out to witness that love of God to those with whom we interact in ministry and otherwise in our lives.”

Sister Stephanie continued her ministry in education until elected to Congregational leadership in 1998. After that term, she served in several internal ministries for the next leadership team, including Communicator, Vocations Director, and Chair of the Community Support Trust. She also gained valuable board experience serving on boards for Presentation ministries, as well as SafeHouse, a ministry devoted to prostituted women, and Vallombrosa Retreat Center. Sister Stephanie is also a trained Spiritual Director.

In 2010, she was elected to a six-year term as President of the Sisters of the Presentation. At the end of that term, in October 2016, she became the Executive Director of the National Religious Retirement Office in Washington, D.C., which manages the annual national collection benefiting the Retirement Fund for Religious.

This poem by Sister Raphael Consedine is deeply meaningful to Sister Stephanie. “It speaks to me of the cycles of challenge and growth that I experience in my life. Certainly, there are times of resting in one ‘place’ or consolidation of personal learnings. Then, there are the times of call and choosing, leaving the comfortable and moving towards the crossing place. As I have grown older and learned to trust in my own experiences and most especially in the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life, the crossings have become more natural, yet always a challenge and a time of deep learning.”

Trasna

By Sister M. Raphael Consedine, PBVM

The pilgrims paused on the ancient
stones in the mountain gap.
Behind them stretched the roadways they
had
traveled, already a far journey - (was it a
lifetime?)
ahead, mist hid the track.
Unspoken the question
hovered:
Why go on? Is life not short
enough? Why seek to pierce its
mystery?
Why venture further on strange paths,
risking all?

A voice they knew called to them,
saying: This is Trasna, the crossing-
place.
Choose! Go back if you must,
you will find your way easily by yesterday's
road, you can pitch your tents by yesterday's
fires, there may be life in the embers yet.
If that is not your deep
desire, stand still. Lay down
your load.
Take your life firmly in your two hands –
(gently... you are trusted with something
precious) –
while you search your heart's yearnings:

Surely that is a gamble for fools - or lovers.
Why not return quietly by the known
road? Why be a pilgrim still?

What am I seeking? What is my quest?
When your star rises deep within,
trust yourself to its leading.
You will have light for your first steps.

This is Trasná, the crossing-place. *Choose!*
This is Trasná, the crossing-place. *Come!*

Ministries:

- 1981: Administrator, Presentation High School, Berkeley
- 1985: Vice Principal, Epiphany Elementary School, San Francisco
- 1986-1987: Principal, Presentation High School, Berkeley
- 1988-1999: Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Social Studies Teacher, Presentation High School, San Jose
- 1999-2004: Councilor, Sisters of the Presentation, San Francisco
- 2004-2010: Internal Ministries, Sisters of the Presentation – Vocations Director, Communicator, Chair Community Support Trust, Spiritual Director, Volunteer Ministry, Sisters of the Presentation, San Francisco
- 2010-2016: President, Sisters of the Presentation, San Francisco
- 2017-present: Executive Director, National Religious Retirement Office, Washington D.C.

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