

Sister Joanna Bruno

*“Do not follow where the path may lead-
Go instead, where there is no path
and leave a trail.”* Ralph Waldo Emerson



In a modest home in Berkeley, California, Joanna Bruno grew up with her brother and widowed mother just one block from Presentation Convent, which also served as the novitiate at the time; the parish church of St. Joseph the Worker; and the elementary and high schools. As a child she was lovingly attended to by four doting Italian grandparents. Upon entering elementary school, most of her teachers were Presentation Sisters who challenged her in her studies, “definitely not doting, but kind.”

During the pensive days of high school, she along with a friend from school volunteered at Providence Hospital in Oakland where she fell in love with nursing and hospital life. She was also interested in the life of the Sisters of Providence, who administered the hospital.

When as a senior, her class was asked to write what was in their future, Joanna wrote, “I think I want to be a Sister;” she was then approached by her Anatomy/Physiology instructor, Presentation Sister Rosemary Campi, who would later become her mentor and good friend. At the time, Joanna was thinking about what congregation was more attractive to her: Presentation, Providence, or Maryknoll, who had been an early influencer through the Maryknoll magazine when she was just 6 years old. “Was it the habit (a fashion statement), the work (teaching, nursing or mission), or the Sisters she knew? She “decided to go with what I knew,” the Sisters of the Presentation, who at the time had no nursing ministries or foreign missions.

In 1963, with the blessing of her mother (who said, “the door swings both ways”), she entered the Presentation Novitiate in Los Gatos, California where classes from the University of San Francisco (USF) were given by Jesuit priests and scholastics as well as the Sisters.

Like many congregations, Vatican Council II made many needed changes in the life and ministries of Sisters. In the last year of the Novitiate each novice was asked to what profession she was attracted. Joanna felt she might have to be a teacher,



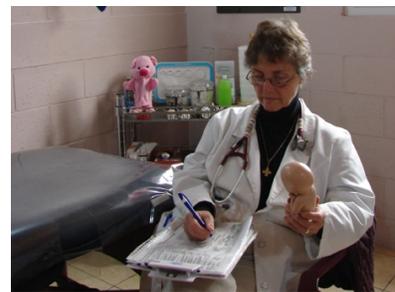
“not my first choice!” But she confidently said she wanted to go to the foreign mission in Chiapas, Mexico, which was just getting started in 1965. She was asked if she ever thought of being a nurse. The response was, “Always.” With that, nursing at St. Joseph School of Nursing in San Francisco was in the future. “It was a miracle.” It was the first time Joanna really loved studying.

In July 1969, the year when the first human foot was placed on the surface of the moon, Joanna left for her first foreign mission in Chiapas, Mexico. For her it was like going to the moon. Working with other Presentation Sisters in foreign missions fostered the love of nursing, foreign mission, Indigenous Peoples, and the Presentation Sisters. Establishing four small rural hospitals with local staff became more creative, challenging and profound. Now, fifty-six years later, they are still functioning; a true miracle.

After the first foreign mission she returned to USF, where she finished her degree in nursing. After thirty-eight years of foreign medical missions in rural Mexico and Guatemala; Directorship of Berakhah House, a home for people living with AIDS; and Leadership on the Congregation Council, Joanna is now a Medical Interpreter in a downtown clinic for the uninsured sponsored by the Presentation Sisters in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She continues to respond to the message of Nano Nagle, as clearly described in a favorite poem:

“Take down your lantern and
Go out! For need calls loudly in the winding lane.
And you must find Christ there.”

Raphael Consedine, PBVM



Ministries

- 1966-1969: Student Nurse, St. Joseph School of Nursing, San Francisco
- 1969-1976: Medical Missionary, Hospital San Carlos, Altamirano, Chiapas, Mexico (first foreign mission)
- 1977-1979: Student, University of San Francisco, San Francisco

1980-1993: Medical Missionary, Hospital San Antonio, San Antonio, San Luis Potosi, Mexico (second foreign mission)

1993-1995: Clinical Advocate, St. Louise Hospital, Morgan Hill

1995-1998: Congregational Councillor, Presentation Sisters, San Francisco

1998-2006: Medical Missionary, Clinica Santa Clara La Laguna, Solola, Guatemala (third foreign mission)

2006-2009: Director, Berakhah House, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

2009-2015: Missionary, Clinic San Jose, Concepcion Tutuapa, San Marcos, Guatemala (fourth foreign mission)

2015-2016: Sabbatical/Volunteer medical translator, Avera Health Care Clinic for the Uninsured, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

2016-2020: Medical Interpreter of Spanish, Nurse, Avera Health Care Clinic for the Uninsured, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

2021-Present: Medical Interpreter of Spanish, Avera Health Care Clinic for the Uninsured, Sioux Falls, South Dakota