

Sister Anne Marie Walsh

was born in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the 2nd child and only daughter among 6 brothers! Sister Anne Marie attended Catholic school and from an early age felt a real connection with the Sisters, thinking that someday she would like to be a Sister herself. But around 7th grade, in the early 70s, changes occurred and the Sisters stopped wearing their habits and many religious began to leave their vocations. She felt very disillusioned and by college had drifted away from her Catholic faith. But in all that time Sister never stopped believing in God...and soon the events that would lead her to religious life would begin to unfold.

Sister Anne Marie graduated from college in Milwaukee, thinking that she would eventually marry and have kids. She began teaching in early childhood education during the turbulent days of the 70s. At one point she realized she wasn't happy. She wanted to find true love, but her life felt dark and hopeless. One day as she quietly washed dishes at her sink, she suddenly felt the presence of Our Lady beside her. Speaking from her heart, Sister Anne Marie said, "I want to be in love and if I can't, I don't see the purpose of life." She paused and then speaking again to Our Lady, said, "Make me fall in love with God." A few months later a big snow storm shut down the city, and as Sister walked from her house into the silent streets covered with snow, she saw only one other person, a man walking down the street towards her. There seemed to be a glow around him and as he came closer to her, they made eye contact: the gaze pierced through the darkness in Sister's heart. She turned away for a second, only to turn back and find he had disappeared. She knew in her heart she'd had an encounter with Jesus himself. It brought her back into the life of the church: confession, reading of the saints and daily Mass. She realized she wanted to give her life to Christ and the Church. Thinking she'd be a lay apostle or missionary, she began to search out a religious community that she could work with. None seemed quite right until she received a call from the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (ISOLT)...

Sister Anne received a call that SOLT founder, Father Flanagan, and another priest would be in town soon and wanted to meet her. She called her father and told him two priests were stopping by for lunch and asked him what she should feed them? His response, "Why five loaves and two fish of course!" So she served them tuna fish sandwiches :)

Sister Anne went to Kansas City (SOLT's headquarters at the time) to see and learn more about SOLT. There she helped with settling Vietnamese refugee families, teaching the children in their Montessori school, and working on the migrant stream during the summers. She knew the Society was where God was calling her to give her life. About 2 years in she started to discern the call to religious life. Mentioning it to Fr. Flanagan, who had become her spiritual director, he said he had seen her call to religious life for quite some time, but was waiting for her to understand it for herself. She professed first vows in 1988 and then her perpetual vows in 1993. She was then assigned to the Novitiate team which formed SOLT seminarians (men studying for priesthood) in the spirituality, vision, charism and mission of the SOLT community. She also began to lead retreats for women, based on St. John Paul II's teaching and writings.

Sister Anne Marie was then sent to Rome for further studies in missiology and consecrated life. Over the course of the next 6 years, living in the Subiaco valley, she established several international houses of formation for the Sisters of Our Lady, and, with the Sisters, took over a little nursery school in the village of Marano Equo where they lived.

The Sisters often attended Papal masses in Rome and Sister came to see Pope John Paul II as another spiritual father. While there, Sister Anne Marie was able to attend many canonizations, including the canonizations of Edith Stein and Padre Pio. She was also present when St. Therese of Lisieux was made a Doctor of the Church.

In 2000, Sister Anne Marie became the First Assistant to the General Sister Servant of SOLT. In 2002 she was sent to help rebuild the founding Convent of SOLT in New Mexico. She was elected SOLT General Sister Servant in 2003 (and Sister Marie Hesed took over the New Mexico mission). The General Sister Servant is basically the Mother Superior of the entire SOLT order, which meant Sister Anne Marie Walsh would be visiting all the SOLT missions, checking to make sure everyone was cared for and Sisters were being formed in SOLT spirituality. Knowing that many women who were coming out of the modern culture felt broken, Sister Anne Marie, learning from the teaching of St. John Paul II, had the formation of the Sisters now include a time for attending to areas of human development and healing, and vocations to SOLT began to rise.

In 2005, Sister was diagnosed with cancer. She immediately went to Fr. Flanagan for the Anointing of the Sick. She discerned the kind of treatment she felt was right, including surgery and radiation, which began on the Queenship of Mary in August of that year and ended in October, on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. She had no recurrences of that type of cancer after that time.

Sister Anne Marie Walsh served as General Sister Servant until 2013. In early 2014, she was diagnosed with a different form of cancer, one that was rare and aggressive, but again she went to be anointed, had the cancer removed and has been fine since. She now offers retreats for women with cancer on facing immortality. It has been a blessing for Sister Anne Marie and the women involved in these retreats, to be strengthened in their perspective on life, and God's special love for each of them.

In 2015 Sister Anne Marie Walsh was assigned to the SOLT Mission Domus Trinitatis in Willey (near Carroll) Iowa. She has led Healing of Family classes, taught and spoken at different events, and worked on her writing (musingsofamissionaryinthemodernworld.blogspot.com), as well as working with the Domus Trinitatis team in the building of the spiritual renewal and retreat center. She plans to lead retreats for healing of families, women with cancer, teaching of St. John Paul II, as well as others when Domus Trinitatis opens. Sister Anne Marie Walsh has been in the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity for 32 years, with 28 of those years a professed member. She says, "I've always loved being a Sister. I know this is where God want me to be."