

Feature

A Woman of an Open Heart – Sr. Livia Ruocco, RSM

By Colleen Vogt

A look of eagerness shone from her face in the novitiate portrait. This same spirit of openness is ever more real today. We met at a tea shop – a perfect place to reflect on Sr. Livia's life which includes 50 years as a Sister of Mercy. In that place, she spoke to me of her life, her family, her community, her ministry and her relationship with God. You may know her from her ministry at St. Ann's or at Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Prior to these experiences she taught school for 28 years. Her life has centered around God's call to serve in these places. And yet she learned that it was not so much what she did as how she did it. As she learned this lesson, she became more open and real and genuine in each and every place she worked. It was this that I was most curious about. I listened carefully for what would speak to me of her charisma,



Sr. Livia (right) celebrates 50 years as a Sister of Mercy with her sibling, Sr. Gloria. A reception was held at St. Ann's where Sr. Livia is on staff.

what would be the distinguishing mark of her story. And what I found was perhaps all the more interesting and edifying for its simplicity. Sr. Livia is a woman of an open heart. She has waited on the Lord's direction time after time, when faced with decisions,



and blessings. God opened a way sometimes when she least expected it and she simply walked through with an open heart into that space with God.

In the years of teaching, it was hard to continue moving to different schools and convents where the Sisters of Mercy served. Yet in all of that she stayed open to God's direction. Sr. Livia spoke gratefully of the many blessings she has received from messengers that God has sent her way who spoke a word when she needed it most or offered an option

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when there seemed no way. When it was time for her to move from teaching into another ministry, her cousin, Fr. Neil Miller, invited her to work in parish ministry at Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Very quickly this path opened for her at that time of decision. It was from Fr. Miller she learned the value of being present with people in their time of pain and joy. Sometimes it is just a simple look, smile or a kind word that shows your care. She continues to practice the art of presence now with the residents and staff at St. Ann's. Ministry for her is a way of accompanying people in the journey that we are all on toward God.

By the end of our conversation, I heard the message God was sending to me. Just as she had spoken gratefully of those who came as messengers to her as she waited upon the will of God, she served as such to bring—bringing me a message to be open and to trust in God at a time when that is precisely what I needed to hear.

Creation

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with him "it is good". Along with St. Cecilia and the St. Ann Community we now continue the process of creation in ways that are appropriate to this time.

In July a "new day" began when Christ the King, St. Salome and St. Thomas the Apostle began a new relationship with a single

pastor and a shared ministerial staff. In the not too distant future, another "new day" will come when St. Margaret Mary and St. Cecilia join the three cluster communities and we all become one parish. Let us pray that as these creative days pass we will be able to say not only that they were good but that God was truly at work in them.