



Sr Sandra Hopkins RSJ Sr of St Joseph

My journey into religious life was via the long road. Not necessarily by choice, more so by circumstances, I guess. That being said, I see the journey now as an extended Novitiate rather than anything else.

I was born and raised in Rockhampton the eldest of twelve children. I have two sisters and nine brothers. My primary education was with the Sisters of St. Joseph and secondary with the Sisters of Mercy. The first part of my working life was in clerical and administrative positions and I have always had a deep interest and involvement in matters Church.



Most of my contemporaries in Religious Life have been there since their teens or early twenties, but as is becoming more commonplace, I was in my mid-forties before my formal journey as a Sister of St. Joseph began. I had been a Josephite Associate for many years and it was a passing conversation with the then Congregational Leader, Sister Mary Cresp, and her later 'invitation' that finally brought me to where I am today. I began my Novitiate in Sydney the year that Pope John Paul II visited and elevated our foundress, Mary MacKillop, to Blessed and on her way to sainthood. I am sure it was Mary's very down to earth Australian character and her dream of educating, and giving a future to the children of the not so wealthy and those in isolated country areas that spoke so very loudly to me. Mary's practicality and desire to be of service and to provide for the battler and outcast, and willingness to go to where the need was greatest is summed up in her words – "Never see a need without doing something about it".

Prior to my Novitiate I completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education in Sydney, and after my First Profession I returned to Queensland and lived in a community which provided hospitality and a place of rest to tired and worn-out carers (mostly mums). I also worked in our Aged Care Hostel in Brisbane caring for our senior sisters. During this time I completed a second unit of Clinical Pastoral Education part time. Following Life Vows in 2001, I had a change of ministry and returned to Rockhampton to take on the role of Co-ordinator of Pastoral Care and Mission at Bethany. I had come almost full circle as I had been working in administration at Bethany prior to joining the Sisters of St. Joseph. God works in mysterious ways as I neither expected to end up back in my home town, much less working once again with the Sisters of Mercy.

I have been asked why a Sister of St. Joseph? Why work with the Sisters of Mercy? Good questions! There is and always has been something that has drawn me to the Josephites. We are all striving to bring the Good News, to be God's Messengers. I feel a distinct 'at homeness' within the Josephite family, and I am enriched through the privilege of ministering to the aged at Bethany. To walk with so many in the last days, hours, minutes of their earthly journey brings me closer to a greater understanding, of the wonder and awe of God, and the promise of Life Eternal. The way I live my life impacts on the way I arrive at the finish line at life's end. But really, life here is just the beginning, and the vessel that I travel this part of the journey in happens to be as a vowed Sister of St. Joseph. Vowed for the Kingdom!

For anyone considering Religious Life or Priesthood.....don't think too long.

Life is too short!!