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**Nun's 60 years enough time for two careers of Church service**

**Sister Vincent de Paul still provides full-time ministry at Denver parish**

**By Jack Bacon**

Irene Frances Grilliot didn't really want to go to Mount St. Joseph College — it didn't have a football team, or boys, for that matter — but she figures that didn't matter to the Holy Spirit.

She's had a lot of experience with the Holy Spirit, and right now they're considering how much longer she should extend an active religious service career that began 60 years ago.

"As I look back, the Holy Spirit had to be working," she said. "I mean, not even wanting to go to that college ..." in part because she assumed it had no athletic programs. An aunt who worked as a parish housekeeper and organist in Cincinnati persuaded her.

That college is Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati. She was wrong about the athletics — she played basketball and soccer there. What really counted, however, was a vocation that came in her first semester.

"The girls and the Sisters of Charity shared the chapel," she recalled. "One day I was there praying when the novices and postulants came in to pray. All at once I thought, 'I'd like to be one of them.'"

The pastor in her home parish in McCartyville, Ohio, advised her to wait a while and she did, nearly a year. She entered the order Sept. 8, 1942, at age 19 and marked her 60th anniversary as Sister Vincent de Paul of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati this month.

Sixty years is a substantial working life — enough for two careers in Sister Vincent's case, half as an educator and half in pastoral ministry, her current assignment at Mother of God Parish in Denver.

Sister Vincent served a year as a postulant and another as a novice before she started teaching fifth and sixth grades at Holy Cross elementary school in Cincinnati.

"In those days, you didn't have to have a degree to teach," she said. She received her bachelor's degree from Mount St. Joseph before she completed her three years at Holy Cross and started a four-year assignment teaching the same grades at Cincinnati's Annunciation School. That was followed by assignment to a high school in Cleveland and the beginning of 21 years as a high school teacher in Ohio, Michigan, New Mexico, Colorado and Illinois. Over the years she acquired a master's degree from the University of Detroit and also completed graduate study at Xavier University of Ohio, Purdue University and the University of Colorado.

She returned to Colorado in 1970.

"I was in Colorado at Cathedral High School as assistant principal from 1965 to 1967," she said. "At that time they sent you wherever they wanted" and she was transferred to Illinois. After the Second Vatican Council, members of the order voted to let sisters select their assignments to the degree possible.

"I liked Colorado so much," Sister Vincent said, and was able to return — as principal at Cathedral. Then, she thinks, the Holy Spirit intervened again.

"It was time to change," she said, "and I did. I went into pastoral ministry," at St. Philomena Parish in East Denver. Her pastor was Msgr. Raymond Jones, now pastor of Mother of God Parish and vicar general and moderator of the Curia for the Archdiocese of Denver.

"I was with him nine years," she said. "Then I stayed two years after St. Philomena's was combined with St. John the Evangelist" and became Good Shepherd Parish. Then Father Charles Jones, Msgr. Jones' brother, invited her to join the staff at Mother of God.

"I'm the only religious and the first pastoral minister here," she said. "They never had a pastoral minister before that. ... It's been a wonderful 20 years."

Sister Vincent said a pastoral assistant "is kind of like a handyman." She coordinates the liturgical ministry, conducts a weekly program at Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, coordinates volunteers for social ministry ("one of the biggest jobs"), supervising the food line — bag lunches provided the needy — and caring for the elderly. She helps the parish keep in touch with all former parishioners in nursing homes, remembering them at Christmas and Easter and visiting them at least twice a year, wherever they are in the area.

"I love to drive," she said, and the job requires a lot of it. Another passion is computers, a technology she once resisted.

"I'm hooked on it," she said. "I know if I retire I'll spend a lot of time at it. It will be a real hobby for me."

As for retiring, "The Holy Spirit and I are working on that. Maybe it's time."

She doesn't know if she'll return to Cincinnati and the order's motherhouse, where all retiring members are invited. The second oldest of 10 children of a farm implement dealer in McCartyville, all but one of her siblings survives; a brother is deceased.

If she decides to retire, Msgr. Jones and the parish will miss her.

"She's a wonderful person," he said. "She's certainly very dedicated. She has worked so very well with (the elderly) and is very dedicated to them. ... She is very committed to the Lord Jesus. She has worked very hard for the Church and for older people."