

Virginia Yeck
By: Gail Quinn

Virginia Yeck, a member of St. John Neumann, has a job, and her job is maintaining her deep prayer life. She says, "Every day I offer my words, joys, and sufferings...sufferings are not wasted, they are used for the Body of Christ."

Virginia knows about suffering. She is a 57 year old woman who is now in hospice due to a stage four cancer diagnosis. Serious illness has a way of honing our perspectives. It brings everything into focus and sheds the superfluous. It makes you replay the journey of life lived and a desire to define life yet to be lived. This too, her story, is about the Churches teaching on the respect for life from conception to death and our obligation as Catholics to live our lives as a Disciples of Christ to the very end.

Virginia has had a very interesting journey, one with an overriding thread running through it, a thirst for knowledge of the Lord. At one point in our conversation she said someone told her that "God writes straight with very crooked lines and that only with hindsight can we make the connection."

Virginia's journey started in a very innocuous manner. She was raised a Missouri Synod Lutheran and practiced her Lutheran faith with her family until about the age of fourteen. Virginia tired of traveling to her church which was far away from home, and like many teenagers longed to be with her friends. She began going to the Methodist church youth group with her peers and decided at age sixteen that she would become a member of the Methodist church. Her parents although not pleased, allowed her to spread her wings.

In college she met her husband who was a very involved lifelong Methodist. Some of their dates included roller skating and other activities with the youth group of his church. The more involved he became the more immersed she became. Virginia and her husband were married in the Methodist church, and soon after Virginia began to teach Sunday school and was involved in many areas of church ministry.

In 1984 Virginia reached a crisis in her life. It was a time of great confusion, turmoil and anxiety. One night she had reached her limit and decided to relinquish her pain to God. Before she closed her eyes her prayer was "Lord whatever your will." Upon waking the next day she felt like a new person and in place of the anxiety she found that she was starving, that she had an insatiable desire to delve deeply into Scripture.

Her faith journey steered her in "crooked lines" from the tenets of the Lutheran, Methodist, Evangelical Protestant, Episcopal churches to the Catholic Church. Virginia came into the Catholic Church through the Holy Cross RCIA program in 1993. In general life isn't easy for anyone and Virginia is no exception. She faced more than one crisis in her life including divorce after 31 years. But life is not just about the challenges it is also about the joys since we cannot know one without the other. During her time of exploration she also experienced the great joy of giving birth to a son.

When asked what message she would send the children and adults of St. John Neumann she cited a phrase from the Divine Mercy prayer card, "Jesus I Trust in you " as the best message of all . She also said she thought it was important to cultivate a relationship with Our Lady, asking for help to bring us to

the Lord. Those who experience a personal encounter with Christ want to participate fully in the body of Christ, and consequently want more involvement in the world, desiring to give back in gratitude. We hope we here at St. John Neumann are providing a pathway for others to make a journey for knowledge like that of Virginia by focusing on the Ignite program. Leading people to develop a more mature sense of what it means to be a Disciple of Christ. Just like Virginia's quest, it is a person by person initiative to find the way.

Virginia's journey is an example of living life completely, purposefully with dignity each day of her life. Virginia says that in addition to praying for all of us she is learning to pray to St. Joseph for a happy death. She asks too for our prayers, the people of the SJN community, part of the Body of Christ.

Virginia we pray for you.