

Molly: [00:00](#) Habits are who we are, and we get to choose everyday who that is. What's remarkable about these women is that their habits are changing the world. Hi and welcome to habits, the good, the bad and the holy. I'm Molly and I'm sitting down every week with adorers of the blood of Christ religious sisters to hear their stories and learn how habits have become more than a symbol for their vocation. They become the means to which they change lives. Hello and welcome back everyone. Today we're here with sister Tarcisia Roths. Uh, thank you so much for joining us. I'm really excited to talk with you today.

Tarcisia: [00:34](#) Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

Molly: [00:36](#) I always do a little bit of research on the sisters that I have on the show and something just stood out like from every person I talked to about you is that you are well loved here. Everyone has something wonderful to say about you and you've done a lot over the years. Um, just some of the highlights. You were president at Newman University. You were the regional leader at Wichita, which is where we are right now. Um, you were on the leadership team and you have a passion for European history. That's right. So we've got a lot to cover. Um, I kind of want to start with how did you grow up? How did you find your way to the adores?

Tarcisia: [01:25](#) Well, I grew up in a large family. There were 10 of us siblings and uh, we lived on a farm in western Kansas. Um, my acquaintance with the sisters, I wasn't able to go to a Catholic school. We lived in a rural area, but I had cousins who entered the community. So that was my first introduction to Adorers. And there was one in particular who was like a big sister to me, sister Vivian. And um, she was my idol. And uh, so I think she was, she integral part is my reason for being here. Uh, when I came to the academy, she was teaching music and she had a band. So I signed up for band. Yeah. And when I came in she said, what instrument do you play? And I said, I don't, I don't know any instrument. I just want to be in your band. So she gave me this sousaphone. So I'm wrapped in this huge instrument that was bigger than I was. But anyway, it was just, she's the one who inspired me to this life.

Molly: [02:29](#) What, what's, uh, when you graduated from high school, you went to college, what were your degrees in?

Tarcisia: [02:35](#) well, I actually entered the community, uh, while I was in high school. I had spent my sophomore year at the academy and then I decided, and there were several of us in the class who decided the next August we were going to come to the convent.

So as postulants we finished our high school. Then after my division, I was beginning my degree right away. And that was at, at Newman. At that time it was sacred heart junior college, but all of the parishes in Wichita were starting schools and they didn't have sisters. So you could get a temporary certificate to teach if you had eight hours or were enrolled in eight hours of college. Oh Wow. So they enrolled me in eight hours of college and I went out to teach in this new school. That was just opening. Fortunately, we, I had, uh, an excellent elementary teacher just across the hall.

Tarcisia: [03:32](#) So it was really a year of student teaching under her. She taught me how to organize the day and how to do lesson plans and, and uh, so I enjoyed the year, but in the meantime we would go to school Saturdays and summer we'd take 12 hours. So my first, um, my first three, two and a half years of college were done that way, teaching and then going to school on Saturdays in summer. Then, um, the decision was made that the college would expand to a four year, right. Because we, at that time you needed a four year degree to get a teaching certificate. And our main purpose in starting the college was to, not only for our community but for other communities in the area to be able to, um, prepare sisters for teaching. Because we had a lot of new parishes were starting Catholic schools.

Tarcisia: [04:24](#) So I got to come home for a year and a half and go full time. And I loved it. I thought, I wish I could just be a student the rest of my life. I enjoyed it so much. Um, then I went back to elementary teaching for another two and a half years. And then, um, as they were preparing sisters to, um, expand the teaching staff at the university, it was decided that I should go to school. Um, it, it amazed me at the time because I just, I thought I'm destined to be a history teacher and I liked history, but, um, our superior said to me, now I know, I know you are thinking of going on to history, but I know you love English. Would you, would you prefer to change? And I thought I have a choice. But as I thought about it, I, I thought I would like to teach literature. I love literature, but I, I, uh, didn't think I would enjoy teaching writing and composition and that. So I said, no, I'll, I'll stick with history. And it was a good decision.

Molly: [05:29](#) And you have a, a passion for European history specifically. That was my major modern European history. What about European history? Really tickled your fancy?

Tarcisia: [05:39](#) Um, I think first of all, it's, it's the, it's the roots of so much of, of western culture, Western civilization. And I, um, I didn't spend a lot of time teaching about wars and that kind of thing, but I

tried to bring in the arts and the literature and the philosophy, those things that were happening at the same time. And so for a while I called it the cultural history of civilization. And we had the art department and, and, uh, some of the other departments helping, they'd come in and teach classes.

Tarcisia:

[06:11](#)

When we taught about the Greeks, we would talk about Greek drama. And so, uh, it was that, that was my excitement about European history. Um, when I got back to the university, uh, I realized that we realized as a history department that we needed to do more than Western civilization. Our students are growing up in a culture that's becoming much more global. So we decided we needed to teach world history. I had no background for yeah, for anything other than European. But, um, I became very interested in, in Asian history, Chinese sister particularly. Um, and, um, so I would spend my summers taking classes, um, wherever I could find something that was being offered on Chinese history or Asian history to, to fill out that area. And then I had a good friend who was a head of an English department. He had studied in the states and had gone back to Taiwan.

Tarcisia:

[07:14](#)

And, uh, he wrote me a note once and said, uh, why don't you come to Taiwan for a year? And I thought, why would I go to Taiwan? And he said, I'd like you to teach in a teach in my department. He was teaching English, but he said the students, um, grow up learning English, but it's geared toward writing and reading and they didn't know how to hear it or speak it. So he tried to bring teachers in who could speak only English, so the students had to learn English. So I thought that would be wonderful. So, um, I spent a year in Taiwan and, um, while I was teaching English, he said, just, you know, use, I said, how, what do you want me to teach? And he said, well, get, get a, there were a lot of novels, paperback novels in English, get so's and let them read those and talk about it and get them to speak.

Tarcisia:

[08:07](#)

So, um, they were interested in the civil rights movement in the states. Had a lot of questions about that. And that was in the late seventies. So, uh, I chose the book to kill a Mockingbird, ah, classic. And then the students would say, what is this word? Whatcha? And I realized it was written in colloquial English, so I had to, so it was not x actually a good choice, but we got through that. Right. But, um, the students knew I was interested in Chinese, so every weekend they'd take me to visit a temple or museum or they were wonderful and teaching me as I taught them English, they taught me about Chinese culture. So that was a great experience. Um, and then how did you end up president of a university? Well, that's a long story first. Uh,

when I started teaching at Newman, I, I had stayed with our sisters in Ruma to go to, they had a house of studies and that was where I got my doctorate.

- Tarcisia: [09:15](#) And that was my first information to adorers outside of Wichita. I thought we were just here and suddenly I realized we were there. And, um, I got to know the sisters very well. In fact, one of the sisters was my roommate at the House of studies and I came home at Christmas and I was talking about sister on the station and they said, you mean our Anastasia? And I said, no, our Anastasia. So anyway, but, but, uh, that was before we had any sense or I had any sense of our international city. And it was only when I came back from St Louis in 59 with my doctorate in history ready to teach history. And um, and that was just kind of in the throws of the whole sister formation movement here in the states where the pope had given religious communities the call to reform our lives and look at the life of Christ, look at our founders. What would she be doing if she were living today? And what are the needs that are, that we're not meeting that need to be met.
- Molly: [10:17](#) So you mentioned the internationality of the Adorers. And for our listeners who don't know, we're in many countries across the globe. Um,
- Tarcisia: [10:27](#) we have all, all inhabited continents. Yes, yes,
- Molly: [10:29](#) we were everywhere. There are so many of us. Um, what is that you again, you mentioned, you know, reforming, obviously Maria de Mattias is our founders. So how do you feel, um, that that internationality plays into what Maria felt so called to do?
- Tarcisia: [10:49](#) Well, that was part of, um, the problem is that up to that point, we really hadn't, there hadn't been an emphasis on translating her letters. We Really, I knew her name, but I knew I knew nothing about Maria's life. Right. And that was just the beginning of my understanding of our internationality. And I learned that Maria had actually started a mission, which eventually failed, but they had tried to start a mission in England and she had, um, formed, um, or, uh, accepted a group from Germany who needed to affiliate. They were a group that was also committed to the precious, but spirituality. So that group came into our community. So I began to see, uh, that already at that point. Um, so, so that was, um, as I say, my first, an introduction to that. And, uh, so, um, I, when I came back in 59, I thought I'm going to be teaching history.

- Tarcisia: [11:49](#) And I did. But, um, our registrar, the sister who was registrar was appointed to be, um, the, um, the formation person for our postulants. So she left the university. So here I was back with a degree and the president said, I want you to be registrar. So I was registered. I still taught nine hours. At that time, the college had about one or 200 students. It was very small, so I could be registered, no typewriters, of course. So I had a, I had a student assistant for a few hours a week and I taught nine hours. So history, um, so I kept thinking, I really don't like to be a registrar. So I finally convinced one of the other sisters to take that job. So I can teach history for right. So she agreed to do that. And then our academic dean left. So I got asked to be the academic dean.
- Tarcisia: [12:51](#) So kind of jumping from the fire fireplace into the fire. Anyway. Um, so I was academic Dean and still teaching history part time. And then eventually I got to the point where I was teaching history full time and then I was elected provincial and in sister speak provincial at that time it was the, the superior of this Wichita province. So you ran divided into provinces and I was elected to lead this province of Wichita.
- Molly: [13:23](#) So you managed kind of the whole world of the sisters living in Wichita. You worked with the team in the, in the United States.
- Tarcisia: [13:31](#) We had three of those provinces and our sisters in Wichita, we're working in mostly the middle states and southwestern states, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, this area. Right. So I was the head of this group and that was in, well, two, four year terms. So eight years I did that. So that's a huge responsibility. Um, what was it like to be elected provincial? It's a huge honor. Um, I can imagine is also incredibly difficult. So what was that like? Well, it was, um, yes, I felt honored. I felt supported by the sisters. They had elected me, but the, the saving grace was the, we do it as a team. I had four wonderful counselors. They said one of my, my strongest suits was delegation. I knew how to delegate. We, we work together as a team. So I didn't carry that burden by myself. We did it as a team. And, uh, so they were a wonderful, wonderful eight years. I had wonderful sisters working with me and I got to know the community much better because of that interaction with the sisters. So then after that eight years, I decided I wanted to go to school for a year just to get back into the field of history.
- Tarcisia: [14:51](#) So I went away to school to study for a year and I had a call from the, um, chairman of the board asking me if I would submit an application for the presidency of the new university.

Molly: [15:06](#) What went through your head?

Tarcisia: [15:08](#) Well, and lots of things. I had come home at Thanksgiving and, uh, one of my former history students who was at that time at an academic vice president at the university took me to breakfast and he told me that he thought the president would be resigning soon and he wanted to know if I would consider, and I had never even thought of being president of the university. I wanted to come back and teach history. Um, but that, that was the first time I'd even thought that might be a possibility. So after I got back, I was on the east coast studying and the chair of the board had called and asked if I would. So I talked with our current provincial at that time and thought about it. And, uh, I'm, I'm very committed to the university and I thought if, if I can help in some way, I, so I submitted an application

Molly: [16:00](#) and obviously it was a great application because you became president of Newman.

Tarcisia: [16:05](#) Yes, yes. I came back in, in the middle of the semester and had an interview with the board and they asked me to sign the contract. So my contract was to begin in July 1st so I went back and finished the school year and came back.

Molly: [16:20](#) And were you the first female president?

Tarcisia: [16:21](#) no, no. Um, we had had two sisters prior, um, sister Hilary had been present when I first came back in 59. Then during the 60s when I was academic dean, it was sister Sylvia gorgeous and she was a real mentor to me. She, she made significant decisions for the life of the university. She's the one who made the decision to go coed. Uh, uh, she also separately incorporated the college, so it wasn't a part of the corporation of the adores. So she had a separate corporation and her own board of directors, she built three buildings. She had come into that role as president from being a principal in an elementary school. Big Job. But she made terrific, uh, decisions. So, and it was during her presidency that we became accredited. That was a big struggle. So she, as I said, she was a mentor for me. And then, um, but then I was the third ASC. We had never had a lay woman president, but honestly a third sister.

Molly: [17:28](#) What did you bring to Newman? Kind of put your stamp on Newman. Um, you obviously made quite an impact. Um, you have an award named after you at Newman now. This sister Tarcisia Roths, um, award, which is given out every spring. It just was given out again. Um, so obviously you made a profound

impact there. Can you talk a little bit about you brought to Newman?

Tarcisia: [17:50](#) Well, when I came in and once again, I, I say that my years is as a provincial really prepared me for that job because there too, I had, uh, cabinet members of my, of my staff who were excellent at their jobs and they had asked me in the interview how I would use them in my role if I became president. And I said, ah, what do you mean? And they said, well, what, what decisions would you make or when would we be included in decisions? And I said, each of you represent an important part of the university, whether it's a student life or academic life or finances you're, you're all a part of. So I said, well, make decisions together. And um, so they were wonderful team. Um, I said when I came on campus, uh, the academic dean was using every closet for class.

Tarcisia: [18:46](#) I mean, there was no space. We had grown tremendously and from sister Sylvia's presidency until mine, which was 20 year period, nothing had been built on the campus except a maintenance building. So we needed everything upgrade. We needed everything. The only, the, the, the ugliest building on campus had been built in 1950 when we were a two year women's college. And it was the physical education and, uh, fine arts. Well, it didn't meet those needs at all in either in either area. In fact, they had started a basketball team for a time during those years. As soon as we became coed, but we didn't have any place to play because the gym wasn't large enough. One of the first questions when I come in as president was, are you going to bring basketball back? And I said, not until we have a building. I said, when we're one year away from the building, I'll let you start a program.

Tarcisia: [19:41](#) So we did. But anyway, we needed fine arts, we needed athletics, we just needed classroom space. The nursing department had no place. So, um, that's, we started. So building, I was a part of our campaigns to build a call first of all for nursing in classrooms and then the fine arts and the athletic facilities. So that was a big part of our energy, I think. I think just the, just the spirit. I, I love the university and I think that we carried that through. I think the whole team was very committed to making this a fine, a fine college. At that point we were college, uh, in fact, at the end of my, we had named the name had been changed to Kansas Newman College. And towards the end of my presidency we changed that. She knew in university. So how long were you president and you met? Nine years. Nine years. 91 to 2000.

- Molly: [20:48](#) Wow. Um, so when you decided, you know, to move on, what was going through your head as a next step? Because I can't think of something that would be a next step to being the president of a university.
- Tarcisia: [20:56](#) Well, I, um, I said my, my greatest love in my life was teaching and uh, I knew that um, there would need to be for their buildings. In fact, we knew we needed a new science center. I didn't know at the time I resigned that in the next year the library would start sinking. You didn't have a, so that had to be torn down in the new library built. So we had gone through, uh, two major campaigns during my presidency and I thought, um, I'm in a good place. I don't want to, I don't want to stay in this job until I'm worn out and not able to do it. And I thought it's better to to leave now and let someone else come in because I knew there would need to be further development and I really wanted to go back and do some teaching, which I did for another five years. I taught teaching after I taught for five years after I resigned.
- Molly: [21:52](#) So you took your final vows when you were 23 years old in 1953. Um, which means I was doing this math in my head. Uh, which means you were born in 1930. Right? So you are 89 years old.
- Tarcisia: [22:07](#) I just had my 89th birthday, which means I'm in my 90th year now. I finished 89.
- Molly: [22:13](#) I never would have guessed it because you are so full of life. You are so vibrant. I kept doing the math over in my head too because I was convinced that I was wrong. Um, so you've lived, you know, nine decades. What has given you the most fulfillment and you've been a president, you've been a leader, you've been a sister, a daughter, a teacher, all wildly important and fulfilling roles. But what has been most fulfilling for you?
- Tarcisia: [22:43](#) You know, I think it's all wrapped around, uh, my being an Adorer. Yeah. You know, I, I came to this community because I loved the sisters. Um, and in a sense it gave me a part of being something bigger than myself. I mean, it's, I feel like I'm a part of the mission of our sisters wherever they are. It's something that, um, and I, um, so my work at the university was that, that was our university. We had started that and I had a passion for teaching, but as s in a sense, I would say my, my greatest joy comes from my choice of being a part of this community because that's brought all of the things, things to bear in my life. So,



- Molly: [23:25](#) There are a lot of conversations today around female leaders, female empowerment, um, as a leader in all areas of your life. I mean, you've been elected to positions of power, um, over and over again. What advice do you have, uh, for women? Um, just, you know, kind of taking on responsibility in their lives?
- Tarcisia: [23:50](#) Um, I would say that, um, I think in some of the women's movement, I feel that women felt they had to become like men in order to compete. I think our, our, our qualifications as women is nurturing. It's, it's to be, uh, to support other people not to lead, lead by, um, lead with people, not, not, uh, not from a domineering position. And that's why I said I always enjoyed having a team. We did things together. Uh, one of my vice presidents of the college came to me one day and he said, I kept trying to figure out what was different about your leadership model. And he said, I decided it's feminine. And by that he meant the circular. You're not leading top down. That was a great compliment because that's what I, I hoped I was doing. Um, and I, and I, I think for women to be women, uh, and to lead in that way by, in, in a collaborative model, not a domineering model,
- Molly: [24:56](#) I think that shines through. We've had multiple sisters on the podcast speak to your influence in their lives and the conversation you've had with them that have led them to, uh, to choices that have given them a lot of fulfillment. Um, actually just in the hallway as we were leaving or as we were, um, coming in, one of our sisters, you know, just reached out and said, thank you for advice you gave her 25 years ago. Uh, what does it mean to you to know that you've had that big of an impact on women that obviously you've had similar way, a deep impact in your life?
- Tarcisia: [25:35](#) You know, I think it's, um, I'm working with a group right now that are trying to, um, to bring, to help people who want to change their life from being, being, uh, in a very low economic status to get to a point where they can be self sufficient. And I think the biggest challenge in that is to get the women, most of them are either single mothers or women and, um, to get them to feel good about themselves so that they know they can make choices. They don't have to have choices made for them. That's why as sister Clara said, I told her to make the decision. I think if people know that they can make a choice to change their life, that's so important. Um, because they take more responsibility than in what they do. And, and to get women who have been, um, you know, put down for all of their life to feel good enough about themselves, to have a good enough confidence in

themselves to make decisions, that's what gives me pleasure. Yeah. Uh,

Molly: [26:43](#) so obviously you're still, you know, continuing to make an impact in people's lives every day. What's next? What's still on your, to do list, your bucket list. What do you know, what do you still want to do? Well,

Tarcisia: [26:56](#) this, this one project that I'm talking about, I'm on the board and one of the, the, uh, we call them allies, people who want to work with these families and we're just beginning and we're having some struggles. And so one of my goals is to get that up and running and stable before I bow out. So, uh, so that's one of them. And then I also volunteer at our center of hope, which is another, uh, uh, it was started by one of our sisters about 40 years ago to help families who are in crisis and need help with rent or utilities. And, uh, so I guess the way I want to spend the energies that I still have are in, in that trying to address the problems of the homeless and the very poor in our city that so badly need this help.

Molly: [27:47](#) So one question we ask everyone that comes on the podcast is about habits, which is the namesake of the podcast. Um, because here on the show we talk about how our daily habits make us who we are. Uh, what is your best habit?

Tarcisia: [28:02](#) I'm not sure I've completely adopted this, but I tell people, uh, somebody asked me the other night, what's my secret? And I said to, to where I am today. And I said, I'm not sure I always do this, but it's that attempt to live every moment the best that you can. We, you know, we spend a lot of our time worrying about what we've done in the past or worrying about what we're going to do in the future and, and we miss the moment. And, uh, uh, so that attention to the people who are around you at that moment being, being open to, to your surroundings and to the, to the grace of that moment, uh, is, if that is, would it would be a key. I, as I said, I haven't achieved it completely, but that's my goal.

Molly: [28:56](#) And what is your worst habit?

Tarcisia: [29:00](#) Uh hmm. Probably so many, I guess. Um, I probably tend to procrastinate. Um, might have something to do. I have it on the list, but um, it just stays on. Yes. Um, but I, I usually meet deadlines, but, but I should be able to do that a little more easily, so I tend to procrastinate it, especially if it's things I really don't, don't, uh, aren't, I'm not interested in, I'm doing

Molly: [29:29](#) well. It's worked for 90 years, so I think maybe the formulas set, I think I may may work. Okay. Uh, thank you so much for coming and taking time out of your day. I've really looked forward to speaking with you. Um, uh, so

Tarcisia: [29:42](#) I'm really grateful that you took the time. Well, I am so glad you're taking the time to hear our stories. Uh, as you said, I think, I think there are a lot of stories that that need to be told. I talked with one of the students who came into our, the one of the nursing faculty sends her students to the center, a pope. Oh, okay. Um, for an afternoon just to see what we do. And so I was showing him talking about that and I was talking about languages in the same building and he said, I didn't know the adorners did all this. He said, they don't talk about it.

Molly: [30:15](#) No, you guys, you sound so I gotta I gotta keep getting you in the room and capturing these stories.

Tarcisia: [30:21](#) Yeah. Yeah. It is exciting. It is exciting. I love to think back over my, over my life. And you know, God's been very good to me. I from being that little girl on the farm, uh, to where I am today. It's been a great ride. Yeah.

Molly: [30:38](#) Well, thank you so much. Yeah. Thanks for joining us for show notes and behind the scenes check out our website at Adorners.org. Habits is brought to you by the adores of the blood of Christ US region, co-produced by Cheryl Whittenauer, Laurie Benge and Molly McKinstry edited by Molly McKinstry. Thanks. We'll see you all next week.