

Molly ([00:00](#)):

Habits are who we are and we get to choose every day 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 Holly I'm Molly. And I'm sitting down every week with the doors 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.

Bernadine ([00:25](#)):

Hi everyone. Welcome back today. I'm sitting down and talking with sister Bernadine. WESA sister Bernstein. Thank you so much for joining us. I'm really excited. You're here. I'm glad to be here. Glad to talk with everybody who will be listening. Yes, definitely. How did you find your way to becoming a sister? Well, by dad, I have to, uh, to her at the Cod, but here my dad's younger sisters and I admire them a lot. And the sisters taught us at grade all the way through grade school. I was the fifth and sixth grade. I think the sisters here at first went to Brazil as missionaries and the sisters out there would write very interesting letters home for the sisters here at Wichita and by odds would make copies that said up to my dad and I read them all, both memorized them. So you always love the idea of travel that travel, but the idea of big ambitious dairy, you know, we had these little Holy childhood magazines at elementary school. They had stories of missionaries at different places that we were encouraged to say Petty's at. If our classroom saved \$5 worth of petits, we would get to make they pegged baby to be baptized. That was our goal. That was your big, your big dream. Hi everyone,

Molly ([01:42](#)):

Molly here with the little interjection, for those of you who are wondering what sister Bernadine is talking about back in the 1960s in Catholic schools, teachers and nuns encouraged students to raise money or bring in their pennies from allowance to donate, to assist Catholic missions. And most of these missions, we're working with children in other countries while the phrasing may seem odd, and this is no longer practiced in schools today, it was a way to raise money, to help missionaries and missions back in the 1960s. All right, now, back to the interview,

Bernadine ([02:13](#)):

It was, it was something that I would, I would read all of those magazines and picture myself doing all of this, but I always do. I was part of it. I thought that was going to be ambitious, very soft place. And that with the sisters, probationary is it started the Bishop in Brazil. I was sure that's what I would do. So I had to become a sister and I had entered the Cod, but be a sister so I could be efficient. Right. It was just the logic. Like you have spent the majority of your time with the adorers not in the United States, you spent over 30 years in Korea. That's true. What did you do in Korea? I was there. I have heard Betty thing fall. I was, it was a learning type. I also worked at ministry was as director of a daycare at later at kindergarten and the daycare, we had three, four, and five-year-olds we had four at five-year-old.

Molly ([03:14](#)):

I'm assuming you're fluent in Korean.

Bernadine ([03:16](#)):

There's no way you could survive for the five years. If you didn't speak the language.

Molly ([03:21](#)):

Um, so Korean is a really different language than English. Was it hard to learn?

Bernadine (03:26):

Well, I've studied a little Spanish. I fired them. They're Betty, their grammar, similarities and vocabulary severities, especially with Spanish embedded Java, uh, words are civil Verity, but Korea there is [inaudible] Korea. That sounds like it. If you think you understand the word as it Iglesias word it's, it's not that a booboo is a married couple.

Molly (03:58):

Can you teach everyone how to say welcome in Korea?

Bernadine (04:04):

Those

Molly (04:04):

Case was much longer than I anticipated, and I am not going to disrespect the language by trying to say that back. But for listeners, you can rewind that as many times as you need to get that right. So did you learn Korean kind of boots on the ground while you were there? Or did you go to school to learn Korean before you went over there?

Bernadine (04:22):

I went to school to learn Korea. Before I went by, instructor was graduate student here at WSU. He was from solos that I had here at WSU. I went to Kalamazoo to study. He was from [inaudible] at the accent. That was their idea is that's the door. But if you're from so that you speak with that kind of access, it's, uh, you're, you're, you know, it's a good durable rates. Um, but the, where we were at to bossy way on the Southern coast, they speak with a very different accent.

Molly (05:01):

So you had to learn the diction and the change in the word.

Bernadine (05:04):

An example is when we were first there, we went to visit somebody. That lady said, Jay saw, I had no idea what she did. I looked at sister Clara, one of our Korean sisters that she said, I'd just say, Oh,

Molly (05:18):

It's a huge difference. Yes. That's

Bernadine (05:20):

A very big difference. Uh, so you had, I had to, I thought, well, I must have studied Greek. Well, I just learned another language, but, uh, the neighbor lady would come over. She was about the IB, I suppose. And she would come over and talk to me for a couple hours every afternoon. My ears would get accustomed to hearing it. And when she would leave, I'd ask sister, Claire, what was she talking about? And she'd say, I'm not sure.

Molly (05:50):

So it seems like you learned Korean, but you really had to learn Korean when you got there. Okay. So did you know through your schooling that that Korea was on the path for you? What did you get your degree in?

Bernadine (06:06):

I agree is that elevates education. I taught elementary schools. [inaudible] at Kansas, in Wichita, several places in Kansas.

Molly (06:15):

So you taught elementary school for how many years of years before you went to Korea. So you really spent almost 40 years as a teacher, right? Wow. That's an incredibly long time. Obviously you found it fulfilling role.

Bernadine (06:31):

Big a teacher helps in so many different areas. When

Molly (06:36):

Did you leave to go to Korea

Bernadine (06:38):

In 30? Go ahead. 77,

Molly (06:42):

77. Um, so you were over there until 2007, 2018. Obviously can't do math particularly well today. Um, there was a lot going on in the world during that time, huge advancements in technology, in education and access in becoming a global world. What was it like being in Korea and, um, communicating with the sisters back home and seeing the differences in, uh, how things were changing across really across the globe?

Bernadine (07:17):

Well, it made it much easier to use emails. Yes. Sister cardio. Who was what? By, when she was dyed the water to learn, to use the computer so we can email each other. If I live to be that long, I hope I bet it bet you said I pushed her.

Molly (07:35):

Yeah. I think you got to have people push you along into the hard stuff in life. Um, so you came back in 2018. Why did you come back? Because I knew it was time to come back. Yeah. I'm sure that was a really hard choice to come back after spending 30 years in another place. Yeah.

Bernadine (07:52):

I toyed with the idea for a number of years at that I thought, well, I of 11, there were, I had brothers and sisters. Wow. That started 2005 every year. What have, have died? Oh my goodness. And I thought, I don't want to be there for I'd tell him there's nobody left. That's was a big part of my decision that I think it was more difficult for them because I was so far away.

Molly ([08:19](#)):

Right. And where are you in the order? Are you the number of died? So you're almost the baby though. You're close. You're close to the

Bernadine ([08:29](#)):

Younger sister. Okay.

Molly ([08:30](#)):

So you did come home in 2018. What was it? What was it like in Korea? What things still make you smile? What things bring back the great memories of the time that you've spent there,

Bernadine ([08:41](#)):

Sisters there.

Molly ([08:43](#)):

I heard a story that they all called you. Grandma. That's horrible. Yeah.

Bernadine ([08:52](#)):

They, uh, older people, you don't call by their day. If they're older than you are usually like interesting. It's a sign of respect. People, adults are called subtypes by their job. They're called teacher financial advisor. Mr. Kim, the financial advisor, teacherly put that. You've called them with their title or their job title,

Molly ([09:17](#)):

Which I'm sure it seems very odd to us, but is it's really ingrained in the culture. Yeah.

Bernadine ([09:24](#)):

And, uh, Edward, somebody you've talked to an older woman is a respectful title. So everyone, God, you grandma, all the sisters, younger sisters said that people call big rapper. Wow. The first time somebody called me grandpa, I was 48 years old. So that was a bit of a shock. Yes, it was.

Molly ([09:44](#)):

What was the hardest part of moving halfway across the world to a completely different culture, a completely different set of people.

Bernadine ([09:53](#)):

The idea of going was at venture, right? I mean, it was something that I felt called to do, but it was, it's always interesting to go. Do I do place and see new things and learn new things. I found it very weird at October, the end of October. And it was very, very interesting for about five bucks at that inside of B. But the summertime, they have a rainy season, the clouds Cub, and it pours right outside their window light. They got it right. First three days in a row. Oh, I bet the cloud boobs away had that a couple of days it comes back. It does the same thing. And inside of me, it said stupid.

Molly ([10:35](#)):

I've made a mistake.

Bernadine ([10:37](#)):

It was like, the Ray was stupid though. Sleeping on the floor was stupid. The language was stupid. The clue the food was stupid. Everything was stupid. That's all it was. And I said to myself, now look here ever since you were in elementary school, you wanted to be a visionary. And you came over here. If you have that kind of an attitude, if everything is stupid, you're not going to be able to do anything worthwhile. Right. So where does that come from? This feeling? I, since I've talked with people, from students from the university and other people who've bedded at other country and they talk about that same attitude of, I discovered I was expecting myself to do things. The Korean way. Korea is a very tradition. Korea is a very traditional society. And if it don't do it, according to the tradition, it's wrong. It's not different. It's wrong. The two words aren't that different itself, but then be like behind them are very different. Okay. Yeah. They are very similar. They're very similar and everything I did was wrong. How do you rig out a wash cloth? I would, I would test it, but you do. Oh,

Molly ([11:54](#)):

So, uh, because no one else can see us. Um, I was twisting horizontally and sister Bernadine was twisting vertically. So everything you did was wrong. Okay.

Bernadine ([12:05](#)):

Everything was wrong. According to the tradition,

Molly ([12:08](#)):

That can't be an easy thing to hear constantly.

Bernadine ([12:11](#)):

And I said, there's her, myself. I'm different. I'm not wrong. What I do is different. I don't have to do it the way the Koreans do it. The day I came home, after 35 years, I was still, there's no way I could understand. I could understand more of the language, but all of the feeling behind that language, I didn't understand there still where it could, because I didn't grow up with that.

Molly ([12:38](#)):

That's such an interesting perspective to take on, um, you know, 35 years of your life of really finding peace very early with the fact that you were always going to be different than there'll be different. Right. Wow. That's a, that takes a lot of I'm sure. Prayer and grace and frustration over time. Yes. Um, so you were there with the Korean sisters who, um, are born and raised in Korea. Were there any other, um, sisters with you that weren't raised in Korea

Bernadine ([13:09](#)):

The second year sister? Very [inaudible] your sister Soviets. According to his cake. And then she, she stayed about a year and she went back, came back.

Molly ([13:18](#)):

So it was a year before you had a compatriot. That's right. And w did that change, did it feel less heavy when,

Bernadine ([13:28](#)):

But still very KB. She went to Seoul it's

Molly ([13:31](#)):

We did live together.

Bernadine ([13:33](#)):

It was like almost 20 years later or 15. We were more than twice. More than 15 years later, we lived together. Perfect. You were pretty well adjusted. Right. By that time I was like, okay.

Molly ([13:46](#)):

Right. What was the culture or the, um, custom that was strangest to you or hardest to adapt to? Because it is green is a very different culture almost.

Bernadine ([13:59](#)):

I don't know. I never thought of that.

Molly ([14:02](#)):

Cause when you said sleeping on the floor, my ears perked up, I don't think I would enjoy it.

Bernadine ([14:07](#)):

I don't mind sleeping on the floor. Did you mind when you started? So no, but I was at Colorado. We worked with, uh, after Rita to teaching religion after school, that country parishes, we traveled to seven different parishes. We usually did get home until 10 30 or 11. I had, I have a day person. I can't function did the evening after, but I still, after lunch, I would lie on the floor. I'd take a nap. I found it very easy to sleep, to sleep on a flat the floor. Don't think I did like about sleepy, the Flores. They heat the building with hot water pipes under the floor.

Molly ([14:48](#)):

Oh. So it's really hot on the ground. You, they had

Bernadine ([14:52](#)):

A thick mattress, which just held the heat at that quilt above a fit quilt, which held the heat. And I wake up, just stretch with perspiration several times. I thought, well, I must be sick.

Molly ([15:10](#)):

You were just sweating it out all the time, all the time. Uh, so when you came back to the States, after being gone, did you continue on a new ministry or did you take the time for more personal reflection? Reacclimating things?

Bernadine ([15:25](#)):

Well, I came back here. I did get involved in it outside bit of string, but this sister in charge of the house said, she's got she's too young. She's too. We want to keep her in the house. So she gave me a couple of jobs right here. The house was decorating a chapel and I, after a couple years, I moved to one of the

houses over on the other side of the university, but I would come back every day here and help take care of chapel. I'd watering plants around the house and help get Caritas.

Molly ([16:01](#)):

And, um, for our listeners, Cartus, hasn't been mentioned on the podcast yet carnitas is one of our assisted living facilities, um, that is housed in our Wichita center. So, um, sisters in long-term care are still, they still live in the center. Um, but on a long-term care floor with medical staff and, um, all the accoutrements that come with, come with that. So you, uh, did you live with the Korean sisters when you were in Korea or? Yes. So you've always lived in community your whole life. You've never lived alone.

Bernadine ([16:33](#)):

There was one year there that I lived at the, uh, the kindergarten that building, our sisters were working in the parish right there, but I lived about it. They covered visit to talk.

Molly ([16:50](#)):

So you've always known community, a common theme that we've talked about because for a lot of people, it's this foreign concept of how do you live with a bunch of women for your entire life? Um, what is it like living in community? Um, what joy does it bring you? What challenges does it bring you?

Bernadine ([17:06](#)):

There is somebody support for [inaudible] community that that's support calls to be, to, to grow, to be accepting of Betty, right. Different personalities. Yeah. It's support in a way that is challenging. And I think that's really important.

Molly ([17:25](#)):

Yeah. I, I personally had my own ideas of what living community would look like and it wasn't until I got to travel to each of the centers and see really the ecosystem that's created when you all live together, um, to see the, just the incredible amount of joy and familiarity and love that exists living in there is

Bernadine ([17:50](#)):

So much supported love. Yeah, it is. It could be overwhelming when I think about it. And you've experienced that support in a new way recently, you've had some health struggles. And what has it been like to always know that you have, you know, 180 women across the nation behind you supporting you and helping you and each side by C's. It was, I beat somebody, somebody yesterday, sister Francine was first time. I'd seen her at since last supper. Yeah. And to see her and she is so affirming that I get a better. Yeah, it's always, so it's a surprise at the sisters. I go almost from a distance that I see very selfish. They are so encouraging. So loving, so supportive. Yeah. It's just, I mean your face just lights up. You can tell how much joy you get from these women. Uh, so there's one question we ask every person that comes on the podcast, what is your best habit?

Bernadine ([19:00](#)):

My best habit is smiling. You are a very smiley person. You're always happy. Smile. Yeah. And what would you say your worst habit is? My worst habit I would say is what I get involved in doing something I ever take else at people arrive, going there to do something. I beat somebody in the hallway and I just

barely noticed them. But here could barely be very focused, I guess. Uh, well thank you so much for taking time out of your day. I really appreciate it. Your story is, um, is so unique. Uh, you know, going to another country for 35 years is remarkable. And I, I think, uh, our listeners are going to learn a lot from you from it. So thank you so much for taking time out of your day. You're a rock up 35 years when you live there, you're living, you're just living day by day, just living your life. Thank you so much. You're welcome. I hope people enjoyed this story.

Molly ([19:54](#)):

Thanks for joining us for show notes and behind the scenes, check out our website, [adorers.org](#) habits is brought to you by the adores of the blood of Christ us region. Co-produced by Cheryl Wittenauer, Lori Benge and Molly McKinstry edited by Molly. McKinstry thanks. We'll see you all next week.