

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 Holy 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. Hi everyone. Welcome back today. We are sitting and talking with sister Miriam Rau our assistant Miriam. Thank you so much for sitting down and talking with us.

Miriam (00:32):

Well, you're welcome. It's my pleasure. We're

Molly (00:35):

Going to talk a lot about the different ministries you've done in your life as a sister, but I want to touch on the ministry you're in currently, which is long-term care. Can you talk a little bit about what you do every day?

Miriam (00:46):

Well, I work at assisted living our sponsored ministry at Maria court and moving and I work at Villa Maria, which is also it's a nursing home and there they're not connected there several blocks apart, but I do provide communion service for the days that we don't have mass. When we have mass, I get the residents there either via wheelchair or remind them we have Protestant services. So in other words, any church service that we have, and I try to facilitate it in such a manner that the wishes of all of the residents in both places are met. For instance, when I moved to Mulvaney and started this ministry, the residents that Maria court said, they didn't have any Protestant church service on Sunday. They couldn't go out narrowly. Some of them have cars, but not many, and they didn't always want to depend on their families. So I called the different pastors in my vein, and most of them were very generous in agreeing to one Sunday a month, or it really is every six weeks they will come and they will do a prayer. They will preach on the Bible and we have music.

Molly (02:08):

I think a lot of times people assume, um, Catholicism is this closed off box where we're open just to other Catholics and no one else. So when you talk about, um, coordinating other faith opportunities, uh, what would you say to people who, who have that idea in their head that Catholicism is a very closed group of people?

Miriam (02:31):

Well, I would hope that we are the universal church, that we are not a closed group. And I think when Jesus prayed that all would be one and we all want to go to heaven. And so to me, each religion shows us something different about God, or can, can you say more about that? Um, well maybe in our Catholic religion and especially with our charism, we talk about the blood of Christ as being, um, the lifeblood of, of

Molly (03:06):

All of us, right. Running through every person, regardless of who they are.

Miriam ([03:09](#)):

Right. And so Jesus cared enough about us. God did that. He became man and human like us. And to me, the blood of Christ means that Jesus not only died for us, but he lived for us. And, um, we are all important and special. God loves each one of us in a unique way. And so to me, when I go to a Protestant service, I joined in with the singing I joining with the praying I joined. It was just about everything. I don't receive communion. Uh, but that's the only thing that really, I think I don't do. But, um, so yeah, I, and I really try to get Catholics and Protestants in well, vain to become more friendly and open and know more about each other because in the beginning it seemed like they were not so inclined.

Molly ([04:05](#)):

Yeah. I love that. Um, it's, it's almost an integration of previously segregated groups, which leads me actually to another question. Um, you lived in Georgia for some time and worked on integration of segregation in schools. Can you talk about that because that's just an incredible journey that you went on?

Miriam ([04:27](#)):

Well, I was born in Georgia and actually I was born in the era when, um, we had black mates. My Nana was a maid and my family and she was like, my second mother. Um, we, we cared about Nana. Um, my mother, I was in the community already went to her funeral, you know, so to me, um, black people, I learned to know about them in a, not so good way in the sense that when you were two or three years old, you take what's given. And we always treated Nana very well, but it never occurred to me that, well, there were black, uh, doctor's offices and white and different entrances to the office. Uh, churches were separate, school were separate, schools were separate, but then as time went on, by the time I entered the community and, um, then I went back to Georgia and I taught, but I also taught in North Carolina and the different schools that we had black and white, and we did bring them together to children. And, um,

Molly ([05:40](#)):

What was that like bringing together children that had previously been taught that they should be separate?

Miriam ([05:47](#)):

Well, I think it wasn't so much the children with the parents.

Molly ([05:51](#)):

Yeah. Because the, we learned, right. Yeah.

Miriam ([05:54](#)):

And so, um, we had some Rocky and we just had to keep working at it, you know, and, and keep working at the fact that we're all together, black and white, Chinese, whatever we would be, that we are all God's children and, you know, those days are behind us of, you know,

Molly ([06:15](#)):

So segregation. Right. Um, so you're totally right. Segregation is behind us, but the topic of racial inequality and, um, and continued prejudice is obviously still a hot topic in the world as someone who grew up in the segregated South and then moved on to integrate segregated schools. What are your thoughts on the conversations that are going on now about race?

Miriam ([06:44](#)):

I think for one thing, it was not just the South. I think it was the North economically that, uh, treated, uh, black and white people differently. And it still happens today, but I think, um, it's one reason why I have wanted to minister to black people. And I had that opportunity a lot of my life, um, because I just felt that we it's sad that we have treated them like we are. And as Jim Wallace says today in one of his books, it's the original sin of America. Racism is wow. I really like it. Yeah. And, and so I think we have a long way to go, but, um, to keep examining always my, um, my ideas, my thoughts, my actions, you know, how am I really responding to people? It's an ongoing, because I think I, I just think it is. Yeah. So I keep working with it. I always tried to go out of my way to treat every child fairly. You can't say equal because children are different and have different needs. But, um,

Molly ([07:58](#)):

So I think you bring up an interesting point that we all react very differently to the prejudice of prejudices that have been put on us. And I, I can't imagine what that must've been like to navigate white families who felt some type of way about black families and black families who were so used to having to do twice the work for half praise. Um, what, what did that teach you about yourself and your faith and, uh, yeah.

Miriam ([08:35](#)):

Well, I think it taught me to realize that I am limited and I commit many faults and that I'm far from perfect, but it made me more tolerant of others. It made me more understanding, much more understanding of people. And when, uh, say the black father came, I could understand it and empathize with him more. I think because of that understanding and realizing what maybe they went through, I didn't go through, but to try and put myself in their step chef, well, their shoes. And so I think it made me more understanding and more patient with what happens, you know, and more, again, more understanding of the situation today, because I think that's a situation that's repeated in many ways and many different places.

Molly ([09:31](#)):

Yeah. Uh, so we talked a little bit about it, uh, in this other topic, but you were a teacher for many years. Uh, that was your ministry for the longest period of time. What did you teach and what did you like about teaching?

Miriam ([09:46](#)):

Well, I started out with first grade and to me, uh, the miracle of a child, because then they learned to read in first grade that they would learn the alphabet and the symbols. They would learn words, you know, and to put all that together in language. Um, to me, that just was amazing. It was a miracle. And I just love to see that happen. In first grade, I taught first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, seventh and eighth. I've taught every grade, the whole gamut, but I think the hardest to teach is really the very beginning to teach your child reading social skills. Um, so, but I loved every grade I had and the children, but again, to me, it wasn't just the knowledge, but to really help that

child to see that they are loved by God, that they are important to respect themselves, you know, in values. Um, that to me is so much more important than the subject matter. Yeah.

Molly ([10:49](#)):

So, um, so you joined the convent when you were, how old

Miriam ([10:56](#)):

Actually, what happened was I, the sisters from the Columbia, former Columbia province taught schools up and down the East coast. And they taught, uh, in Albany, Georgia, the Catholic school. And I just, I was really attracted to them. And, uh, it seemed to me in some ways, God was calling me to be a sister. But then by the time I got to sixth grade, my cousin had babies one after the other. And I babysat by the time I was 12, I was babysitting babysitting a three-year old, a two year old, a one-year-old and she had another one. And, um, I really did love babies. And so for me, it became a real pool, you know, do I want to marry and have children? Uh, is that what God's calling me to? I entered in my junior year in high school now, again, that was a different year.

Miriam ([11:55](#)):

Yeah. I, you know, I'd never would, well, we, you couldn't enter that young today, but, um, I had time to decide, you know, we, we had formation years number of years. So as time went on, it just seemed to me that that was right. But I guess the thing that I go back to is then after I taught, I went to Jersey city, New Jersey. Well, I worked with Hispanics for a while in Patterson, New Jersey, but then I went to the sisters of St. Joseph have, um, uh, alternative school. They have a home for mothers who are not married. Some of them were homeless. Some of them had been abused. Some of them had been on drugs. They didn't have an education and they had children, right. So the moms and the children lived upstairs and we had a daycare downstairs for them. And then the moms went to school and until they were in first grade, the children could come and stay there in the daycare. And so, um, I started working in a daycare. I started with a three and four year olds and I went down to the babies and then I went on to get a national certificate in early childhood. But for me working with these babies from six weeks on up, and most of them, six weeks to two years, three years, um, it was like, God was gifting me with children.

Molly ([13:22](#)):

It was a generative fulfillment for you, even though they weren't, you know, technically you are children,

Miriam ([13:29](#)):

They weren't, but you know, when you're in that kind of situation, it happened that I had children who would call to me and not to their mother, but the moms really did not have parenting skills. Um, you know, so we tried to teach them that, but it was very fulfilling. And, um, and it was sad. So you don't ever forget these things and the children stay with you. It's kind of like our motto was we hold their hands for a little while, but their hearts forever. And you don't ever forget those children, we don't keep in touch. No, but so it

Molly ([14:08](#)):

Always has a special place in

Miriam ([14:10](#)):

Your heart. And it was such a blessing that in, in that way, I really could be with young children. And, um, that to me was very special. I went to that after teaching.

Molly ([14:23](#)):

Yeah. So you joined, uh, the sisters of, for your formation years when you were 17, 16, 16. And when did you take final bass?

Miriam ([14:33](#)):

Uh, well, let's see, in those years we had your postural and see a year ago this year and then five years of temporary professions. So it was seven years, seven plus 16,

Molly ([14:45](#)):

23. You can tell you were a teacher because it was all my brain power to come up with 23. That moment, you always felt kind of a dual call. You knew you wanted, uh, children in your life, but then you knew you wanted to be a sister. Can you, um, talk about, especially for, you know, any women listening to this who feel that kind of dual call, how did you make the choice or did you, you know, trust the instinct, whatever it was for you to choose the path that was right for you, because it obviously gave you both fulfillments anyway, you still have had, um, a remarkable lifespan with children.

Miriam ([15:29](#)):

Yeah, I think it just seemed to me that God seemed to call me in the sense that I would be a better, not a better person, but more loving and following what God would want for me by being a sister. I think I would have been so distracted if I had been married that, um, my life would not be for God, for many people, that's their way to God. It would not have been my way. I would have gotten deterred

Molly ([16:05](#)):

Interesting concept this idea of a way to God. And I think so many people, uh, think that, uh, choosing to become a sister is, um, such a foreign thought, especially these days, because there are, there's less interaction with sisters. Talk about that idea of, you know, everyone has their own, uh, way to find God and that for some people it's through religious vocation, for some people, it is through other things.

Miriam ([16:35](#)):

Well, for one thing, I think there's so many choices today. And so many people do such good work and I really admire married people. I mean, I think God, uh, they're a lot more selfish than I am and I just really, uh, they have to have so much trust and faith, you know, just to go out and wait to hear to care and not to care. In other words, you're raising your child to be on their own. It's not like, well, I want you to be a copy of me and fulfill what I couldn't. Right. It's you are your own, you know, when you need your own happiness, I just feel that, um, uh, I wouldn't have been able to do that. I would have been too possessive and I just feel God calls us in different ways. And I, I think a lot of times circumstances dictate and our gifts and the people we meet. I think all of that goes together to, uh, help us to know and follow. And sometimes we take one step at a time and Hey, you know, we hope that's it. But

Molly ([17:45](#)):

So you've been a sister for how many years, well need celebrating

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

My 50th in 2012

Molly ([17:55](#)):

57. I had to think about that pretty hard. No. So you've been an assistant for almost 60 years. Uh, you'll celebrate your Jubilee soon, which is sister speak for, um, a big celebration that happens at your 60 or 65th year. Um, what would, what have you learned about yourself as a sister and then what has given you the most fulfillment through these years?

Miriam ([18:20](#)):

Well, let's see. I think again for each one of us love dictates, you know, when I get up and when I go to bed is Petro Aero pay the Jesuit superior general said, Hey,

Molly ([18:34](#)):

Molly here, for those of you wondering father Pedro, uh, Ruby is a Jesuit priest who lived from 1907 to 1991 and wrote the poem fall in love, which is where the line that, uh, Miriam is talking about comes from. It is not a direct quote, but we have it linked in the show notes. All right. Now, back to the interview,

Miriam ([18:53](#)):

Um, I guess I found more and more that I love God and am more in touch with God and in tune with my life. When I look back, I see the ways that God has really helped me. I mean, I could have gone the wayside and, uh, but for the grace of God, there would go, I, and all kinds of different things.

Molly ([19:16](#)):

Molly here, the quote Miriam just said is sometimes attributed to a mid 16th century statement by John Bradford there. But for the grace of God goes John Bradford. However, it's a paraphrase from first Corinthians, 15, eight through 10, which States, but by the grace of God, I am what I am. So there's mixed messages on where this quote actually comes from, but it is currently a widely used English idiom. All right. Now, back to the interview,

Miriam ([19:45](#)):

You know? Um, so for me as I go along, it's like the longer I live, the more I see God's care in my life. And so I'm able to trust God more, right. Uh, community has it's bet it's, um, benefits and its drawbacks.

Molly ([20:05](#)):

Yeah. That's a common theme across all the interviews that I've done is idea that community has been the greatest joy. And also I think definitely the source of, uh, the greatest growth for people.

Miriam ([20:20](#)):

I, I think it is the other thing. It's also taught me more to stand on my own.

Molly ([20:28](#)):

Um, can you say more on that? Because I think for a lot of people, they view community as a way to lean on others. So can you talk about how it gave you the ability to stand alone?

Miriam ([20:40](#)):

Well, I believe it that again, God calls us differently and so, no, I don't want to be leaning on people lean on God, but not on people. And I've had to work with that. You know, it's much easier to just follow or not say anything or just go along with now sometimes I think. Okay. That's okay. But there are times when I need to stand up and no, I don't really agree with you. Let's respectfully disagree and community gives you the strength for that. Yes. Um, and I think the other thing is, uh, we used to go lock, you know, everybody did the same thing at the same time. No, we are not the same. We are all different. And I heard some, one of the sisters last night, something say something about, well, the introvert in me says, I have to go alone. Now I've been with people all day.

Miriam ([21:36](#)):

And I experienced that. Yeah, I'm working I'm with people during the day. And a lot of that is listening to people, trying to be there for people, because to me, I don't want to go and talk about God and preach to people at the nursing home. I want to be with them and be there for them. I try to be an advocate if I can push them in their chairs, do this, talk to them in different ways. So, um, when I come home, I am an introvert and I do need time alone and I need to respect that. And on my days off, I need to respect that I need to do things that enrich me so that I can be for other people. That's not always been easy because I tend to be codependent. And it's much easier to please you then, you know, but it's something I work at, uh, to me, you know, it's, it's important. Yeah. There's a balance. I think for each one of us and the balance is different.

Molly ([22:41](#)):

Um, the topic of self care, which you just touched on has become another hot topic lately. Uh, this idea of, uh, taking time for rest, for caring, for who you are as a person, um, wholly, instead of who you are as an employee who has a sister, a daughter, a mother, whatever that is. Uh, can you talk about, you said it's been hard for you to find that balance. How have you worked to find that balance? How have you found self-care to be rewarding in your life?

Miriam ([23:10](#)):

Well, for one thing, when I'm not taking care of myself, I get grouchy. I get, um, more negative. I tend to become more. I tend to become depressed. And to me it takes me away from God and it takes me away from myself. And so, um, we are each temples of the Holy spirit. God is in each one of us. So I need to take care of myself. And, um, I can, I mean, I'm in tune enough with now that I know when I'm not, and these are manifestations, you know, I get impatient, I get negative. I'm over tired. Um, what have you, so,

Molly ([23:56](#)):

So what do you do when you start feeling those poles on you?

Miriam ([24:01](#)):

Like today I was off today and, um, there were a number of things yesterday that I found challenging. Um, and so today I took time, I went to Botanica. I took extra time to pray. I got up later in the morning.

Molly ([24:21](#)):

So you just took the time to kind of breathe a little life into yourself before you went and gave that to other people.

Miriam ([24:29](#)):

Yes. And, and I mean, I just, I find that important.

Molly ([24:33](#)):

Yeah. I agree with you. So, uh, so there's one question I ask every sister that comes on the podcast, the things we do everyday, make us who we are, our habits. Uh, so I love to ask what is your best habit? Well,

Miriam ([24:46](#)):

Prayer to me. And when I talk about prayer, I'm not talking about prayers. I'm just talking about a union with God, knowing God is with me and in me and around me, nature to me is very important. And I always take time to just thank God for it. I try to get out in it as much as I can, but nature is really important to me. Yeah. And what's your worst habit? Well, for me judging people in my mind, you know, uh, and an example of that is, and I, I work with this. We had an employee at work. She's a young person. I bet she must be 2021. Okay. Anyway, so every day she'll say to me, I'm tired, I'm tired. And so, you know, now I said, Oh, I'm sorry. Uh, but I thought to myself, we don't, you get older, you're going to know what it is to be tired. That's my thought. Now I'm trying not to ever, you know, but then one day she said to me, uh, my one-year-old at home is doing this and that and the other. Now, when she said that, I thought to myself, no wonder, you're tired all the time. You've got a, one-year old at home. So to me, so often knowing more about a person helps me not to be, I try not to be judgmental. I try to hold, you know, but at times I do. Cause I, cause

Molly ([26:11](#)):

We perceive the perception.

Miriam ([26:13](#)):

You're right. And um, so there were times like that, that I just say, thank you God, for letting me hear that, you know, and know that. And then yeah. Yeah. But that's the thing I really work with because to change my perception of things.

Molly ([26:31](#)):

Uh, well, thank you Miriam so much for coming and sitting with us. I've really enjoyed getting to pick your brain and talk about your ministry. So thank you so much. Thanks for joining us for show notes and behind the scenes, check out our website, [adorers.org](http://adorers.org) habits is brought to you by the adores of the blood of Christ us region. Co-produced by Cheryl Wittenauer, Lori Bengé and Molly McKinstry edited by Molly. McKinstry thanks. We'll see you all next week.