

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 29



People often ask me how I came to work for the Jesuits. I spent over 20 years of my life working at a major teaching hospital in Boston, and at one point thought that I would spend my whole career there. As I look back now, spiritually I was often in an alien world. I was not surrounded by the signs and symbols that were familiar and comforting to me. I was not surrounded by things like a crucifix on the wall, the opportunity to attend Mass in the hospital chapel, or familiar prayers. But I loved working there and knew that I gave good care, as did everyone I had the privilege of working with.

Among these special people was a doctor named Fr. Myles Sheehan, SJ, who will soon become our new provincial. For many years, we took care of older people together. After he moved to Chicago, I used to ask him jokingly, “Don’t the Jesuits have a job for a nice Irish Catholic girl like me?” One day I heard the answer, “yes” and before I knew it Fr. Robert Levens, SJ, (provincial of the New England province from 1997-2003) had offered me a job as Province Health Care Coordinator. Nine years later I continue to marvel on how that changed my career path, but more importantly, my spiritual journey.

I used to tell friends that I was “lucky” and “in the right place at the right time” when they asked about my new position. In 2004, I went on a Cursillo retreat through the Archdiocese of Boston. This led me to taking a course called “Living with Christ.” I was hungry for more and saw a flyer for the Nineteenth Annotation Retreat. I knew with my children’s busy schedules I could not do this at night, but there was also a group starting on Wednesday mornings for 22 weeks. It was a lot to ask. I summoned my courage and asked Fr. Thomas Regan, SJ, provincial, if he would allow me to go on work time. He did not hesitate and nodded yes. As I left his office, I wondered to myself how many nurses were fortunate enough to have a job that also cared about spiritual growth.

On Week 1 of the Nineteenth Annotation retreat, I read Jeremiah 29. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." I was asked to ponder where I saw God’s saving providential hand in my life. In my journal, I wrote, “I see God’s saving providential hand in the career I have chosen (or He has chosen for me). I have a gift. This helps me fulfill my purpose of being created to praise, reverence and serve God. I was not lucky or in the right place at the right time. Coming to work for the Jesuits was part of His plan for me.” I continue to be grateful to Fr. Regan and the other Jesuits who have touched my life. What a blessing it is to me that my work life and spiritual life are not so separate anymore.

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