



Sister Jean Rodman~ Interpreter & SSJ Volunteer Helper

Two of my favorite pictures in our Graced History Wall are of the Sisters arriving in the new world from France and the home where, among other things, they taught deaf children. I always add a third scene: the later arrival of Sisters Celestine and St. John who had stayed behind to learn sign language. Sister Maura was my leadership person back in 1984 when I asked to study interpreting; she reminded me of our long SSJ association of work with people who are deaf and encouraged my moving into that ministry. After years of freelance interpreting, I became a full time staff interpreter at RIT in 2003, and now work with the NTID Deaf and Hard of Hearing students who take courses in the other 8 colleges at RIT – especially students majoring in business, computers, or engineering technology.

In addition to interpreting, I am also missioned to care for the Motherhouse grounds. I am the third generation of Rodman farmers to work on this 150 French Road property. Here, I am Sister Mary Mulch – if it can have mulch around it, it's mine to tend. What's less known, however is the hours of loving tending done by other Sister-gardeners here who do more than they ever get credit for toward making our home so welcoming. And what I'm still realizing myself is the power of the actual ministry involved when I'm working with the volunteers that our amazing Lisa Hartmann sends my way. My original response was to look at these (usually) young workers as, just another pair of hands to extend my ability to get things done. The charm of the kids, often students from Nazareth or other local colleges, quickly helped me see them as people who deserved more from me.

Now, I hope they'll leave from our work together having learned a bit about gardening. More important, I hope they carry away a sense of their role in the SSJ of Rochester's wish to incarnate- through our grounds - the welcome we extend to everyone who comes to our Motherhouse and our care for the earth. I share with them the fact that the work of the Sisters over many years and the generosity of many donors made this lovely home possible for all of us who live and work here and call it our Motherhouse. I talk about the financial reality: their voluntary work helps us pay our essential, skilled workers- in food service, nursing, environmental care and staff - as fair a wage as we can afford. And I tell them that many of the residents and visitors here are experts at the "second equally important gardening job." If the first gardening job is to make it beautiful, the second is to enjoy it! What I learn from the people I work with exceeds anything I give and I thank God every day for calling me to be with them.