

# End of an Era as Sr. Carmen Cruz Retires From Pastoral Care at Mission

Since the beginnings of St. Joseph's as a sanitarium in 1900, the Sisters of Mercy have been present at St. Joseph's and later Mission Hospital, providing bedside care and comfort.

The retirement of Sr. Carmen Cruz from Pastoral Care at Mission marks the end of an era in Asheville. She is the last to serve patients and their families in Pastoral Care.

Sr. Carmen's ministry actually began in 1952 when she entered the Sisters of Mercy of Belmont in her native Guam. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Sacred Heart College and for 28 years taught grade school in both Guam and around the United States in parish schools, serving six of those years as an assistant principal. For six years she also served as a youth director in a couple of parishes.

Sister Carmen joined the Pastoral Care Department at St. Joseph's Hospital in 1984. She is board certified in the National Association of Catholic Chaplains and has served for four years as Director of Region IV, the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, with a



membership of 308 chaplains in seven states and Puerto Rico. During this time she also completed a master's degree in applied Spirituality from the University of San Francisco and at USC Berkeley. She received her Clinical Pastoral Education certification from Mercy Fitzgerald Medical Center and Misericordia Hospital in Darby, PA. Last year, she was

awarded "Whos Who" in Cambridge Who's Who.

For six years she worked primarily with St. Joseph's Hospital's AIDS patients along with several other assignments.

So many have been touched by Sr. Carmen's ministry that it would be impossible to quote them all here.

"My Dad was a patient in the Heart Center on the Memorial Campus for 156 days 11 years ago. As you can imagine, his spirits got down after being there such a long time," says Linda Anderson, director of Mission's Adult Medical Surgical Units. "Sr. Carmen was our chaplain on 7N General Surgery on the St. Joseph Campus at the time and she made a point to visit Daddy several times a week and pray with him even though she wasn't assigned to that area. He often remarked on her kindness and humor and how she lifted his spirits. She did not have to go over to Memorial

Campus and minister to my father but she did it because she cared about me and knew how important he was to me. That's the kind of lady she is."

In addition to her ministry to patients and their families, both on the St. Joseph and Mission Campuses, Sr. Carmen is the first female chaplain in

law enforcement in Asheville, She and two other ministers started the Chaplaincy Department at the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office. In 2011, she will celebrate her 20th year as a chaplain with the Asheville Police Department.

She is a former board member of Catholic Social Services in Asheville, and

in her second term on the board of directors of the Irene Wortham Center for developmentally challenged children and adults.

In 2012, she will celebrate her 60th year as a Sister of Mercy at her Jubilee celebration at the Motherhouse in Belmont, but she isn't slowing down much.



In 2010, Sr. Carmen received thanks from Asheville Police Chief William Hogan for 19 years as a police chaplain. Sr. Carmen is the first female chaplain in Asheville law enforcement.

Sr. Carmen says her future plans are to stay in Asheville and continue to work in the community, particularly with the Asheville Police Department and the Irene Wortham Center and wait for some more exciting opportunities to serve.

"I don't see this as a retirement, just a change of course," says Sr. Carmen. "No one can retire from doing God's work. It's a lifetime commitment."

"My 26 years as a hospital chaplain have been rewarding and enjoyable," says Sr. Carmen. "I thank God for this opportunity to spend time with the staff, physicians, patients, and their families."

"In the 25 years that we have worked together, I have known Sr. Carmen to take her ministry seriously and that she truly cares about the patients she has worked with and especially about the staff at the

# Ideas for Winter Workouts

Brrrrr! If just the thought of getting outside to exercise makes you dive under the covers, instead choose one of the many indoor workout options. Below are just a few of many choices.

- Walk at an indoor location, like a mall or a gym. If you need extra motivation to get yourself to the mall, join a walking group. This will help you stay accountable to someone other than yourself.
- Join a health club. This will allow you a large variety of physical activities to choose from every week.
- Create a home gym. This doesn't have to be expensive. You can easily set up a great workout routine with just a set of dumbbells, an exercise ball, and a jump rope. Libraries lend workout videos at no cost and you can try out a new one each time.
- If you have stairs where you live or work, spend as little as 20 minutes at a time climbing up and down the stairs for a very intense and efficient workout.
- Find a local indoor pool you can use. Try swimming, water aerobics, or even just walking or running laps in the water.
- Check out Mission's new wellness program, where you can earn points for fitness activities that turn into dollars in your pocket. Search "Employee Wellness" in the MOD search engine.

By staying fit during winter you'll be able to avoid gaining weight, have a head start on swimsuit season, and avoid losing strength and stamina caused from inactivity. Just as tulips need winter nourishment from the Earth to bloom in spring, humans need to continue to nourish their bodies during winter so they too can blossom when warm weather returns.



Mission honored Sr. Carmen (shown right) with a reception on January 21. The line to greet her was long as current and past staffers waited patiently to wish her well after 26 years as a chaplain, first at St. Joseph's Hospital and later on both campuses. One of many to express congratulations was Mission's Ethics Coordinator Mary Caldwell.

St. Joseph Campus where her ministry has been centered," says Chaplain David Nard. "She is a woman of prayer. She goes out of her way to attend funerals and special life events that staff let her know about.

"She has also enjoyed her social life and over the years has loved to go dancing and celebrate almost any occasion. She could remember names of people and their families better than anyone I know. And she always asks about your family members.

"Sr. Carmen is an institution in herself and she will be greatly missed here at the hospital."

In her letter of resignation, Sr. Carmen referred to Ecclesiastes 3:1: "There is an appointed time for everything and a time for every affair under the heavens. For me, this time is now."

In celebration of the new chapter and at her request, Chaplain Services coordinated a special service in St. Joseph's Chapel. Following the service she was honored at a reception held on the St. Joseph Campus.

"I'm so appreciative of the many people who have worked to make the reception and my transition a success," said Sr. Carmen. "I especially want to thank all the many staff members who dropped by the reception to wish me well.

"I also want to thank Mission's Chaplains, in particular Director Beth Darling, who also served as official photographer at the reception; Ann Thomas, Chaplain Services coordinator; Velinda Fisher, executive assistant to Dr. Ron Paulus; Teresa McCarthy of Human Resources; St. Eugene's Music Director Carole Marrs; and St. Eugene's pianist, Nora Vitro."



Through the years, Sr. Carmen has been very active with the March of Dimes WalkAmerica, raising the most money as an individual at St. Joseph's Hospital.