

Leisure

The life of a Holy Names sister was one of responsibility and hard work. Yet community life also provided opportunities for leisure and enjoyable diversions. Superiors wisely gauged when their charges needed a respite from their work. A declaration of congé—French for furlough or vacation—in which silence would be suspended for the day, was always greeted with rejoicing. Local outings, which might include a walk through the woods, a picnic, or even the occasional movie, served to revitalize the community. Feast days also offered relief from the usual busy routine. Even the simplest amusements were eagerly anticipated.



Sister Patricia Jean Konrad and another Oregon sister throw snowballs, c.1945

games and music were popular activities. Sisters called upon their creative skills to make the most of their leisure time. Nowhere was this more evident than in the “simplicity shows” they produced. Novices took great delight in performing these comical skits for the amusement of the professed sisters. Simplificities never failed to entertain and the sisters often engaged in playful competitions to see who could develop the most fanciful story lines. The simple pleasures of recreation provided a welcome relief from the day’s busy schedule.

A fun time was when we'd have simplicity shows. Believe me, they were simplicity! We would do skits—I remember a sister playing the villain. Then we'd sing and play piano. And we got away with some pop songs, too. The shows were great fun. They were very [simple], but we enjoyed it. — S. Annaloris Ward

Visits from family members and friends were treasured occasions. The separation from loved ones proved the hardest sacrifice of religious life for many Holy Names sisters. An hour spent in the visiting parlor with parents and siblings was a source of infinite pleasure and provided a change from the daily routine. In some places, novices organized special recitals to entertain their guests and demonstrate new accomplishments gained through convent life. In addition, visitors provided a window into the world from which sisters had detached themselves. The chance to share in family developments was a great source of joy for members of the community.

Vacations provided the sisters with the opportunity to lay aside their responsibilities for a short time. The congregation maintained a number of vacation properties, many in coastal areas. Holy Names sisters in Florida enjoyed the beautiful beach at Anna Maria Key. Gearhart was a choice getaway in Oregon, while sisters in California spent their time at the villa in Los Gatos, and, later, Villa Maria del Mar in Santa Cruz.



Sisters ice skate, Novitiate and College of the Holy Names, Albany, 1964

Every evening after supper we would gather in the Community Room for "Recreation of Rule." Here we brought out our boxes of sewing, usually mending or darning. Sitting around tables, we sewed and talked. I was not great at darning or sewing, so had to concentrate on that task. Our conversations had to be meaningful—no gossip—and sometimes the Superior would guide it by bringing up a topic from the Catholic paper. — S. Sheila McEvoy

The *Constitutions* specified two periods of recreation each day. For many sisters, the highlight of recreation was the chance to converse freely among themselves. Card



Oregon and Washington sisters meet halfway for a picnic at Millersylvania State Park, Washington, c.1963
Courtesy Sister Joan Christine Von Bank



Assistant General Mother Theodore and Mother General Marguerite of Cortona walk with Tampa sisters Ethelbert and Mary Frances on the beautiful beach at Anna Maria Key, Florida, 1937

In Washington, Seattle area sisters vacationed at their Vashon property on Puget Sound. These breaks were communal affairs, as sisters did not travel alone. They greatly enjoyed spending time together in an informal setting away from the rigor of convent life. These brief interludes allowed them to return to their regular routines with a renewed sense of commitment and enthusiasm.

A couple of us were at the beach in bathing suits. Some children were approaching, and one sister was worried because these were children she knew. She wasn't anxious to have them see her in a bathing suit. When they got up close, one said, "Hi Sister! You forgot your glasses!" — S. Kathleen Stupfel



In all aspects of their life together: religion, teaching, chores, or recreation, the sisters came together to create a community governed by a spirit of cooperation and love.



Novices gather around the piano, Novitiate and College of the Holy Names, Albany, 1964



Novices at the Convent of the Holy Names take a break from their studies for a quick game of volleyball, Los Gatos, c.1960



Sisters from the College of the Holy Names row on Lake Merritt, Oakland, 1956