



**Sisters of Providence**  
OF SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS  
*Breaking boundaries, creating hope.*

**all things possible**  
 is a publication for women  
 exploring life as a Sister of  
 Providence of Saint Mary-of-  
 the-Woods.

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*I look forward to meeting  
 you and sharing with you  
 the ministries of the Sisters  
 of Providence of Saint  
 Mary-of-the-Woods.*

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Love



Mercy



Justice

**Sister Paula Damiano**  
*current ministry:* General Officer



**Sister Paula Damiano**

**Current ministry:** General Officer  
**Years in the Congregation:** 42  
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### Quick Connections

• **What do you like best about Saint Mary-of-the-Woods?**

*It's natural beauty and the people who are here.*

• **On weekends, I love to ...**  
*read the Sunday newspaper, sleep in late.*

• **I am passionate about ...** *life.*

• **Name one thing most people don't know about you.** *For a good portion of my life, I was a tent camper.*

• **Name one thing you liked best about being a kid.** *Being able to go to silly movies, and being carefree about life living next door to my grandparents and aunts.*

• **What would you like to hear God say when you arrive in heaven?** *The line that comes to me is from the song of songs: "Come now, my lovely one, come."*

**Q: Why did you choose to become a Sister of Providence?**

**A:** I had wanted to be a sister since I was 3 years old. My aunt worked at a Catholic hospital. She would take me there frequently. The Sisters were very, very kind. They were Franciscan sisters from Pittsburgh. My aunt also would take me to Tuesday night devotions at church when I was very little. I think all of that attracted me to religious life. In high school, we moved to Orange County, Calif. It was the 1960s: sun's out, surf's up! For a couple years, I didn't think a whole lot about religious life. The 1960s also brought with it that movement toward service. President Kennedy had talked about the Peace Corps. There was that whole emphasis on giving to other people. By the time my senior year rolled around, people were talking about what colleges they would go to, etcetera, etcetera. As I thought about my future, that whole notion of religious life came back to me. The sisters who taught me in high school (Marywood) were the Sisters of Providence. We had access to the chapel, as students. Frequently, we would stand outside when sisters were at afternoon prayer just to hear them praying together. It was that culmination of a desire for service, a desire for giving myself to something bigger than myself and, certainly, I really felt something inside me attracting me to it. I call that grace. I didn't call it grace then because I didn't know what to call it.

**Q: What do you value most about your ministry opportunities?**

**A:** I think what I most value has been the gift that I have received in getting to know so many people who really want to know more about spirituality, who want to know more about justice and who God is in their lives. In being on that journey with people and talking with them about it, in teaching or in parish work or even in the ministry I am in now in administration, it helps me to grow. It's made me ask myself the questions that I feel are significant questions about life, future, our world, justice, about peace, non-violence. It's like an extraordinary partnership that I have felt with people along the way.

**Q: Why would a woman today find joining**

**the Sisters of Providence an attractive choice?**

**A:** Because if this is where she belongs, she'll know she can become the best person she can be, because religious life, living in community, really does call for every gift and talent you have and some you didn't know you had. There is a sharing of values, one with another. There's the ministry that we do together for the people of God. So, she will be stretched. She will be enriched. She will be surprised. We're a group of women who have come together to serve God, make Providence known, and we have said we would do that through works of love, mercy and justice. We're in it together.

**Q: What role does prayer have in your life?**

**A:** For me, prayer is the root of my life. It helps to put things into perspective. It's a substance that feeds my inner spirit. My morning quiet time is really important to me to help me get through the day with some sense of focus. Of course, here at the motherhouse, sharing the Eucharistic liturgy with the larger community is a way that helps me be united with the Congregation in this extraordinary gift of sacrament. One of the other things that's important to me about prayer is to have some variety in prayer. My quiet time is usually contemplative sitting time. Reading the scriptures, listening to some music, being in God's creation are some of the ways that I vary my prayer. That is important to me. Artistic expression is really important to me too.

**Q: How important to you is the community lifestyle that religious congregations have to offer?**

**A:** Really important. Being in community can rub off some of the rough edges because you're bumping up against one another all the time. There are happy days and there are some challenging days. I really have to say it has helped me become the best person I could become.

**Q: How much influence does Saint Mother Theodore Guerin have in your life?**

**A:** I didn't feel like I knew her until maybe 15 years ago when, probably more like 25 years ago, when I really started reading her journals

and letters. I was kind of intrigued by her. For me, she is a model. When I read her journals and letters, I often feel like she is writing directly to me. When we quote her, I feel like those are just for me. She's talking directly to me. I had the opportunity to visit her home in Etables, France, and to walk along the Breton shore where she walked. That was important for me because it helped me see her as a real person. She was a woman who lived and breathed and faced all the challenges life had to offer.

**Q: Is there anything that has caused you perpetual concern?**

**A:** It probably is a good thing that I was never a parent. I give enough worry to my niece and nephew as they grow up, I can't even imagine what it would have been like if I were a parent. My family is small. I have one brother and one niece and one nephew. I just worry about them all the time as they grow up. So I think there is a reason I am not a parent. I would be just a worry-wart mother. Something else that gives me perpetual concern is that we never learn a lesson from war. In that book called "The March of Folly," the author recounts all of these wars we have engaged in on this planet. It really is a march of folly because it never really resolves anything.

**Q: What gives you hope?**

**A:** The niece and nephew I worry about all the time, people like them really do give me hope. So many of their values really are the values that will move the world forward. Basically, I think most people are good, and that gives me hope.

**Q: What would be the one thing you most want people to remember about you?**

**A:** I wish they would remember that I tried to be a caring person. It's something I am conscious of a lot. I could have given that person more time. I could have given them more sympathy. I could have given more of myself.

Read full interview with Sister Paula, including additional questions at: [www.SistersofProvidence.org](http://www.SistersofProvidence.org).