

FOLLOWING *the* SPIRIT



PHOTO: DAN VAILLANCOURT

Kathleen Morrow Simisky CE'93

A Ministry Groomed by God

BY ELIZABETH WALKER

Kathleen Morrow Simisky CE'93 knows that the Holy Spirit can be very persistent. Kathy was certain that divine intervention was at work when she found herself drawn to pastoral ministry as a professional career and a personal journey. She heeded the call not long after starting college at the same time as her children.

In 1987, Kathy, then 39, went to work in Assumption's Student Development Center, located in the former "Red House." She transferred the six college credits she had earned prior to coming to Assumption and enrolled in the Continuing Education program. Today, a certified Catholic chaplain with a bachelor's and two master's degrees, this Worcester native and mother of two Assumption alumni, **Thomas Simisky, S.J. '92** and **Laurie Simisky Sheldon '93**, is helping others recognize and strengthen their personal relationships with God. She expresses her own faith through her ministry, which is grounded in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola and Mother Teresa's teaching about the importance of small acts of kindness.

"I was older in life when I went to work full time at Assumption and started taking classes in the evening," says Kathy, who concentrated in theology and psychology. "I went back to school with my children, Tom and Laurie. It was scary to go to college at my age, but great to get my associate's degree with Tom in 1992, when he was awarded his bachelor's degree. I graduated with Laurie in 1993 when I got my bachelor's of science degree in liberal studies. Laurie went on for a fifth year at Assumption to get a master's degree. She's a kindergarten teacher. She and her husband have three children. Tom, a Jesuit, is working on a master's degree in divinity at Boston College. He also does ministry at St. Monica's and at the Nativity School in Boston."

Like her children, Kathy went on for advanced degrees. After taking graduate courses at Assumption, she completed a master's degree in counseling at Anna Maria College in 1998. In 2008, she earned a master's in pastoral ministry at Boston College and was certified as a Catholic chaplain by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains. She also did postgraduate work at the Andover Newton Theological School and earned a certificate in the practice of spirituality from Boston College in 2005. In addition to completing clinical pastoral education units at several hospitals, she also did a spiritual direction internship initiative in 2010 with the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Kathy's multifaceted education and broad experience in matters spiritual and pastoral have led to a multi-dimensional ministry for more than two decades. Her professional roles have included chaplain, director of pastoral care, theology teacher, campus minister, retreat leader, mentor and counselor, among others. She served as director of pastoral care and chaplain at Sacred Heart Nursing Home in New Bedford until 2008. Previously, she was the chaplain at St. Anne's Hospital in Fall River. In this next phase of her career and calling, she is investing her energy and expertise as a freelance chaplain, guest spiritual director and weekend retreat leader.

"I feel that God has been shaping me and grooming me," she says. "I do pastoral visits at a complex for people over 55. I'm also a spiritual director at the Jesuits' Campion Center, where I conduct weekend retreats for people who are in wonderful ministries. I feel called to more volunteering. I'm especially interested in the Ignatius Volunteer Corps and in volunteering with Cranberry Hospice in Plymouth."

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Kathy and her husband, Ron, who live in Carver (MA), give back to the College because they remain grateful for the excellent academic foundation and strong support that she and her children found as Assumption students.

"We always loved Assumption College," she says. "In fact, we're a big Assumption family. My brother, Robert Morrow, who is deceased, graduated from Assumption in 1976. His sons, Sean '06 and Tim '03, and Tim's wife Lynne (Harrington) '01 are graduates, as is my niece, Gina Schofield Fegreus '94. My daughter, Laurie, got married in 2000 in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Assumption gave us more than an education. They gave us a wonderful family and good memories."

Assumption also gave her a daily mantra to express how fully she has responded to the Holy Spirit's persistent call. "I think of the Assumption motto, 'Until Christ be formed in you,' every day," Kathy says. "Through my ministry and my life, I try to do my little part to bring the kingdom of love to the world, as Jesus asked us to do." ❖

