

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Thoughts to Consider



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How can I prevent difficulties from grief?

Many who confront grief for the first time are surprised at the intensity of their feelings. Grief is most often associated with the death of a loved one but it can also result from divorce, loss of bodily function, moving or from a child growing up and leaving home. Because grief is poorly understood, those who have not experienced it personally can be poor helpers. By learning about grief ahead of time we can more capably assist friends in their time of need and can more readily understand the intensity of feelings when death affects our families. Take the time to read and inquire about grief and learn ways to assist those in need of support.

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Sister Weis among women of wisdom

Book speaks of life lessons

By Kathleen Schwar
Copy editor/Staff writer

Dr. Monica Weis, SSJ, saw little reason why she shouldn't be candid for a book about women as they age. "I saw it as an opportunity to give public witness to being a woman religious, and as a service to the book that it have a full spectrum," she explained about her remarks in *What We Know So Far: Wisdom Among Women In Their Own Words*, by former Rochesterian Beth Benatovich.

An initial premise of the author was that as women age, they become invisible. Having celebrated her 53rd birthday Nov. 9, Sister Weis was among the youngest of the women interviewed, and the only woman religious.

All 25 subjects are at least 50 years old, including Matilda Cuomo (New York's former First Lady), Erica Jong (*Fear of Flying* author), television celebrity Sally Jessy Raphael, and tennis pro Billie Jean King. Among the oldest is Twyla Nitsch, 83, a spiritual elder in the Seneca Tribe's Wolf Clan who lives south of Buffalo.

Their stories have a similar element, Sister Weis observed.

"I think there is a commonality of what people are finding. As they get older, the most important thing is relationships," Sister Weis said. "I was tremendously inspired by the power of these women's lives through all their pain and joy."

She found, as did the author, that they



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Dr. Monica Weis, SSJ, professor of English at Nazareth College, and author Beth Benatovich sign books for patrons of Village Green Bookstore, 766 Monroe Ave., Nov. 7.

feel far from invisible.

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from New York, where she co-founded Oracle Press, Benatovich said each woman featured in the book (released recently by St. Martin's Press) is deeply religious in her own way. Each experienced "difficult lessons that cause wisdom that is more a condition of the spirit than of knowledge," she said.

Sister Weis, an English professor at Nazareth College and vice president of the International Thomas Merton Society, said she saw her place in the book's list of women as important.

"Many (of the women) are talking about finding a deeper sense of spirituality, and have come very, very circuitous routes," she said. "I have been very blessed in finding that earlier in life and not having the same circuitous route."

It is a process taken, she said, "till what you learn becomes a part of you. You're not a round peg in a square hole or a square peg in a round hole, but a peg that really fits in the hole and sinks in."

Sister Weis had been a mentor to author Benatovich, who lived in Rochester 25 years until 1988 and earned her master's degree in education at Nazareth.

Among "kairos" moments, or turning points, Sister Weis revealed in the book was a painful time in her mid-30s when she and a colleague felt a romantic attraction that developed into love, and the two had to redefine their relationship. Another such moment occurred as she neared 40, when she was sent to work on her Ph.D. and discovered a competitive and political system, and a "particularly

Continued on next page



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