

IHMs in Action: The Blogging Nun



Although Julie Vieira, IHM, is very down-to-earth, her ministry is definitely "out there." In cyberspace, in fact.

Since July 2006, Sister Julie has written a blog, "[A Nun's Life](#)." In it, she talks about how she became a nun and what it's like to be one. She answers questions about her vocation, about Catholicism and faith and about God.

By day, Sister Julie is a project coordinator for Loyola Press in Chicago. She spends an average of two hours, in the morning or after work, writing new posts, responding to questions and answering e-mail from the blog. Its popularity surprises her. She never really expected people to read it.

"I started it because I wanted to write again," she explains. "I also wanted to figure out new technology and see how people use blogs. And I wanted to address one of my biggest pet peeves - the stereotypes people still perpetuate about women religious."

The blog has allowed her to address that pet peeve both online and in the national media spotlight. Sister Julie has been interviewed by *Time* magazine, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Detroit Free Press*, National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition*, and others. She has also given presentations at the University of Chicago Divinity School about blogging as a form of ministry

When "[A Nun's Life](#)" began, it averaged 10-20 visits per day. That quickly increased as Sister Julie gained visibility. Her blog averages more than 1,000 hits daily and has had nearly 150,000 hits in less than a year.

Sister Julie's blog has its own domain name - www.ANunsLife.org - and she hopes to apply for a grant to expand it. "I'd like to customize it to better fit the way people are using it," she comments. "I'd also like to develop the 'Ask Sister' part of the blog."

The popularity of "[A Nun's Life](#)" speaks to people's need to question and get answers. Sister Julie draws on her education (a bachelor's degree in religious studies and a master's in systematic theology) and experience to reply. She also utilizes the knowledge of professionals she trusts, especially her IHM Sisters.

"I know I can always ask for help from other IHMs if I need it," Sister Julie notes. "The IHM community has been very supportive and willing to share expertise."

Sister Julie views her ministry as online hospitality.

"People come to the blog and say what's on their minds and in their hearts," she says. "It's humbling to be touched by others in such a special way."