



Sister M. Carmela Trujillo O.S.F.

I was born on **October 4**, 1930, a child of St. Francis and a child of the depression. I am the seventh child of nine, four boys and five girls. I don't remember the hardships of the depression years. We had everything we needed in our village—cows for milk, chickens for eggs and soup; sheep, goats and cattle for stew, hamburgers and steaks; and a river fed by mountain streams near enough to harvest mountain trout. In the summer we had some garden vegetables; not too many, for the weather is not too conducive to gardening. There were, of course, abundant piñon, chokecherries and other wild berries. Somehow, our large extended family of Lumberton, all 400 of us, managed to take care of one another through the depression years and later.

My parents, Manuel Antonio Trujillo and Asención Eulogia Salazar were married in 1915 in Park View (Los Ojos). Wanting a good school for their children, my parents moved to Lumberton, New Mexico early in their married life. By the time my oldest brother was ready for school, the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration of Lafayette, Indiana had begun teaching in the public school in our small village. The Franciscan priests had a mission center in Lumberton, and besides Lumberton they served the people of the surrounding villages in both New Mexico and Colorado. Our Church, St. Francis of Assisi, was the central Church, and in the early years our Franciscan priests served in missions as far away as Pagosa Springs and Arboles, Colorado. Father Albert Daeger, O.F.M., later the Archbishop of Santa Fe, was one of the early beloved missionaries in our parish when the regular mode of transport was horseback.

I mention this background parish history because I believe that this history is central to my own Franciscan journey. We all grew up with a sense of “mission”. Often the priests would take altar servers and choir members on their mission journeys. It was a real privilege to be chosen to accompany the priest to his mission. And there was ample opportunity, for there were four priests assigned to the missions. The example of the Sisters teaching in the public school, serving in the parish and being available to the people and the priests, also available to the people and going out to the missions to celebrate Eucharist, to visit the sick and to bury the dead were just what God called us all to do. As I look back, I think these Franciscans had developed a rather unique marketing plan. Our small parish produced five sisters who entered our congregation and two diocesan priests.

With six older brothers and sisters in school I could hardly wait until I, too, could go to school. In those days our school had a pre-first grade, and we could start school at the age of 5. Incidentally, the public school was named, St. Francis School and was located on Church property, right next to the Church. All the children in the school were Catholic, except for one family who later joined the

Catholic Church. School was fun, the Sisters were my best friends, my confidantes, my teachers—they were all I ever wanted to be and I could hardly wait until I could be one of them.

When I made the decision to join, I am not sure. My school years were full of excitement and expectation. Our lives were wound around school and church activities. I was sure God was calling me, I had no doubts. In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Sister Gemma, my teacher, told me that the Sisters, (now a Denver province), were opening a school for aspirants the next year. I was so excited that I could become an aspirant after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, only one year to wait! When I told my mother, she was happy that I wanted to go to the Aspirancy for high school. When we told my father, he would not hear of it. He said: you will finish high school and then you can go. No further discussion. In my last year of high school I again told my parents that I wanted to join the Sisters. My father wanted me to consider going to college where my sister was. I considered it, but not for very long. I graduated in May and joined the Sisters of Saint Francis in early September.

Although I was anxious to enter, after I entered I was totally out of my environment. I was miserable. I had been sheltered in the little mountain village of Lumberton. Alamosa and Durango, Colorado were the farthest I had ever ventured from home, and always with family. Denver may as well have been another planet. I was alone and scared. The Sisters I knew and loved and who had been my teachers and mentors were nowhere around. Sister Reginalda, who had been the high school principal in Lumberton when I was in elementary school, was a formidable figure then and now—she was the Mother Provincial! My father was right; I should have gone to college with my sister.

How my pastor, Father Quentin Hauer O.F.M. knew how I was feeling, I don't know; maybe he just knew that it would happen. He, Sisters Leola and Clare came to Denver for a visit in the early part of November, just in time to rescue me from drowning. I had decided that I would go back with them. My pastor reminded me of how long I had waited, and how anxious I had been; I would get over my homesickness, he called it; I had to give "it" a little more time. Wait until the end of the school year was his advice...I waited. The school year ended. I had survived my first year of college and was ready to begin my novitiate. On August 12<sup>th</sup> my parents, three of my siblings and my pastor were present for my reception into the novitiate ...and here I am.