



“DO YOU WANT MY REAL NAME OR MY ALIAS?”

Of all the Little Sisters of the Poor, it seems that Sister Marguerite has the most ticklish funny bone. Every time Sister Gertrude Mary leans over and says something to her, she cracks up. She opens her mouth and lets the laughter fly.

It’s recreation hour here at the Little Sisters’ convent, in Pawtucket — their time to pause from running a home for the elderly. Each sister has a different duty: Sister Marguerite takes care of the chapel, maneuvering around with her walker as she prepares for daily Mass; Sister Gertrude Mary runs the arts-and-crafts program, now gearing up for the Christmas bazaar; Sister Sheila, relaxing with a jigsaw puzzle, oversees the nurses who work at the home.

Here in their semi-cloistered world, the sisters also take care of their own elderly (like Sister Mary Edward, who with her fireman’s license once

tended the boiler rooms, but who now sits, smiling, under an afghan). Even during recreation hour, the nuns’ work is close by ... A *beep-beep-beep* stops Sister Sheila’s search for a sky-colored puzzle piece; she reaches into the folds of her habit to answer her pager, signaling that one of the residents needs her.

Sister Marie Bernadette — “like Lourdes” — will go with Sister Gertrude this afternoon to collect funds and provisions for the home, stopping by the shop of a local butcher who regularly makes donations.

And Sister Josephine will read through the newspapers and get her companions up to speed on current events — “she knows how to tell us the news in a few words,” says Sister Marie Bernadette.

“But right now it’s all in the stock market,” says Sister Josephine, shaking her head. “So I’m not really up on that.”

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