

# Assumption Spotlights \*

*An Occasional Publication*

## Gloria Herrera

September - 2024



One day, on her way to church, Gloria Herrera was struck by a car on Kinzie. "I still went to church, but they took me to the hospital," she says. In true Gloria fashion, she became friends with the man who hit her and invited him and his daughter to attend Mass. They obliged.

Growing up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Gloria was a bit of a rebel, even acting on a dare to sneak into the nun's refectory of her high school, Loreto Academy. "I was hiding and I heard the rosary beads of one of the nuns coming. If I had been caught, I would have been expelled! Now I go to Mass every day for atonement," she says with a smile.



After graduating from high school at 17, Gloria knew she "wanted to get away." After stints at a bank and loan company, Gloria's career as a flight attendant began in 1967 when she saw an ad in Glamour Magazine to "be a stewardess." At the time, becoming a "stewardess" was very selective: candidates had to be under 27 years old, unmarried, and quit at age 32. When she was 31, the Equal Opportunity Act was enacted. "Just in time for me to keep flying!"

American's emergency training took her away from home and "every year we went for three days to what we called the 'Charm Farm.' We had to be able to evacuate a plane, open the window, do the slide, execute all the commands, and jump two at a time. It was very tough, and I was 27, older than Methuselah, and they were all 20-21." Despite her desire to get away, at first, she was "so homesick, but it was an experience." Her 36-year career with American "was the best gig I could have ever done. I saw the world on their dime."



Finding her calling within the church was not as straightforward. Gloria never married. "People would ask me why, and I said I didn't have time and, now that I have time, why would I?" she says with a laugh. "I used to meet with Monsignor Egan. He was my spiritual director. I saw him once a month for an hour. He would have his hands in prayer at his mouth the whole time while I talked. He said, 'You were meant to be a good sister, a good daughter, and a good friend, a good aunt. You weren't meant to be a mom.' That made me feel fabulous."



In 1972, around the time she joined Assumption, Gloria and her four roommates disbanded, and each got places in Marina City. "It was THE prestigious place to live," she says, and loves it because, "I can walk anywhere." She has been there ever since.



Gloria's mother used to tell her eleven children, "You have a mouth, use it." And she has. Gloria has used her voice to encourage Spanish speaking fifth graders to use their gifts, as a weekly volunteer at Northwestern Hospital, during her career as a flight attendant, and to serve Assumption as a lector, counter, usher, wedding greeter, Mass greeter. "I will help wherever," she says. "Put me to serve on something. I am trying to do the Lord's work."

