



SUZANNE SALVO

Age: 57

Major: Religion and psychology

Graduation Date: May 2008

Suzanne Salvo sits on the edge of her chair, talking about her plans for next year—hoping, wishing, worrying. . . . She has applied to divinity school at Harvard and Boston College, in hopes of earning a master’s degree and launching a career as a campus minister for Roman Catholic students. *But will she get in?* She sounds like any other Wellesley senior, except for one thing: She is a 57-year-old grandmother. Married at 17 in the Philippines, Salvo had five children, moved to the US, and survived an abusive marriage. When her children were grown, she found a job as an office manager and after a layoff, enrolled in business courses at a community college, which ultimately led her to Wellesley. Salvo has discovered new worlds—learning how to move beyond what she calls the “jargon” of her religious faith to study her tradition as a scholar—but has also contributed “what life has taught me” to classes like the Psychology of Adulthood and Aging. She has written papers on topics that interest her at her phase of life—for example, on cognitive decline in menopausal women. But mostly, Salvo says, she has discovered she’s not so different than other students. “Whether I am 57 and Catholic, I am no different from a Baha’i who is 20. At the core at least, at the heart of the matter.” And like them, she sees a long career in front of her: “If I live to 104 like my great-grandmother, I have a whole lifetime ahead.” And yes, she learns later, work as a campus minister is a definite possibility: Harvard has accepted her.

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