



THE MESSENGER

of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kansas

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Building a dream

When three Sisters of St. Joseph first dreamed of Neighbor to Neighbor, they knew moving that dream to reality would take a partnership with the people of Concordia, with individual donors from across the country and with support from charitable foundations.

But Sisters Jean Befort, Pat McLennon and Ramona Medina never dreamed of the partnerships that would be forged.

In the past year, 150 individuals and foundations have given 183 gifts to help make Neighbor to Neighbor a reality. Ranging from \$1 to \$75,000, they are paying for the purchase and renovation of a permanent home for Neighbor to Neighbor at 103 E. Sixth St. in Concordia. The donations also allowed the sisters to launch in temporary quarters in September 2009. Other gifts have come as necessary items for Neighbor to Neighbor—including kitchen and laundry appliances.

And though no dollar amount has

been assigned to the gifts of time and talent, dozens of volunteers have lent a hand with renovations.

Volunteer work crews from Concordia's Catholic Youth Organization and First United Methodist Church, as well as the Justice and Peace Center in Salina, have put in uncounted hours, first with interior demolition and now with renovation.

They have been assisted with the continuing work of employees of the Sisters of St. Joseph — Curtis Mansfield, Gene Ganstrom, Brad Snyder, Jim

PHOTO ABOVE: Sisters of St. Joseph employees Curtis Mansfield, left, and Gene Ganstrom work Nov. 5 to finish installing new windows in the second floor of what will be the Neighbor to Neighbor center.

See **CENTER TO OPEN**, page 16.

SPECIAL EDITION: CELEBRATE OUR JUBILARIANS!

This year we honor 18 women who together represent 1,060 years as Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

They are a blessing to our congregation, and to the people they have served over all these years.

To begin her jubilee year, each sister wrote a reflection to mark this special celebration in her life. These, along with a portrait of each sister, are published on page 4-9.

These special women will be honored by family, friends and the congregation on "Jubilee Day," June 5.

We are forever grateful to them for their love and dedication to our congregation and to the dear neighbors they have always served.

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'Renewal' leads to a God-driven movement

EDITOR'S NOTE: In each issue of The Messenger, we've tried to keep our friends informed about the apostolic visitation that was announced in January 2009. As this issue goes to print, we are in a "holding pattern" — we responded to the Phase II questionnaire by the Nov. 21 deadline and have not heard back from the visitation office as to whether they received our response. As we wait to learn what the next phase will hold, Sister Marcia Allen — president of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia — offers her thoughts on the history of our community and who we are today.

BY SISTER MARCIA ALLEN

The apostolic visitation of religious communities of women in the United States has initiated a good deal of soul-searching on the part of those communities.

Have we failed in the single enterprise to which we are committed? Have we not advanced in our commitment to union with God and neighbor through works of service to humanity?

Those questions quickly segue into another: How has our concern for both God's desire for creation and our living out that desire actually created in us adaptations that make us recognizable to ourselves, but not necessarily recognizable to the general public whom we serve or

to Rome, which authorizes our existence?

In the 17th century, the only authorized religious life for women was within a cloister. It was a closed world in which women pursued holiness through the severe discipline of isolation from the world.

Yet small groups of women in southern France began to gather together in order to feed the hungry, counsel the fainthearted, visit the sick and bury the dead. Many of these tiny groups — including the Sisters of St. Joseph — developed into religious communities of women.

AJesuit, Jean-Pierre Medaille, passed on to the first Sisters of St. Joseph much of his Jesuit heritage in the "Rule" he wrote for the fledgling congregation of women, enabling them to lead a life of service in their world and yet be "real" religious.

This was unheard of in the official tradition of the Catholic Church at that time. It was an adaptation for which there was little precedent and certainly no permission.

But conditions among the people of south central France were so dire that the bishop where the Sisters of St. Joseph emerged could see that these groups of women would guarantee the survival of the culture in which they lived.

Some 150 years later, these same French sisters were invited to the United States to provide Catholic education



SISTER MARCIA ALLEN

and health care for a burgeoning immigrant population. Government did not provide any type of services, and schools, hospitals and orphanages were viewed

as the responsibility of private agencies and organizations.

Six Sisters of St. Joseph came to the St. Louis area in 1836 to begin schools. Their first assignment was a school for the deaf.

They quickly drew new members from the American population. They spread throughout the United States and by 1851 were even in Canada. Their institutions became models for the establishment of comparable secular institutions. Their success continued well into the 20th century.

As state governments began to develop and implement certification requirements, many sisters advanced their education and training to meet those requirements. That professionalism began to vie with, if not replace, the apostolic thrust of many of the religious institutes of women.

By the 1950s it was clear that most religious institutes of women needed to revise their approach to their educational and health care institutions. They needed lay boards, additional financial support and educated women for staff.

At the same time, the United States was beginning a cultural revolution that shifted the vision of women. They increasingly found new choices for a successful, fulfilling life of leadership. They no longer had to choose a religious life to find those possibilities.

By the 1960s and 1970s it was clear those factors were contributing to the decline in the number of women entering religious communities. Ultimately, they did not have enough

members to continue staffing their own institutions; they began to move the administration, governance, and often the ownership to other entities, many of which were secular.

At the same time the Second Vatican Council — Vatican II — decreed that religious communities must renew and adapt. We were to examine our original charism, study the Gospel and adapt to the needs of the times.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia took this mandate seriously and in 1969 had what was called a "renewal Chapter." This included in-depth study of the charism and the original inspiration from the 17th century. It also included serious study of Sacred Scripture. All of this necessitated a deeper spiritual life — one that could support the new professionalism that the members had achieved.

As a result, our sisters became even more serious about the deepening of our original commitment — union with God and others without distinction.

Forty years later, what has happened? The community has changed. We have adapted.

The Congregation is now more faithful to our original purpose — meeting the needs of a world that is searching for meaning.

This leads to a multitude of different services — ranging from care for the earth to advocacy for the unborn, from local engagement to global concern, from work within the Church to the Church at work in the world.

Yet we are united in our one mission — to enable people to retain their dignity, their relationship with God, self and others, and to be truly human.

In adapting like this, we have left our institutions to the care of others and have become relevant in today's world by reconstituting ourselves as



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Noted Merton scholar to lead retreat

Renowned Merton scholar, author and retreat leader James Finley will be at Manna House of Prayer this spring, offering his view of "Following the Mystics through the Narrow Gate."

Dr. Finley, who lived as a monk at the cloistered Trappist monastery of the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, where Thomas Merton was his spiritual director, will begin the retreat April 9.

The retreat's title comes from Jesus, who said, "Narrow the gate that leads to life and few there are who enter it."

"In this retreat we will follow the mystics through this narrow gate," Finley wrote. "... Rather than focus on any single mystic, we will zero in on the ways in which each mystic attempts to help us to understand and pass through ... critical phases of our journey of spiritual



JAMES FINLEY

awakening."

The emphasis throughout the retreat, Finley said, will be on "the humbling and liberating details of what it is actually like to sincerely follow the path the mystics mark out for us."

Finley is the author of "Merton's Palace of Nowhere," "The Contemplative Heart" and "Christian Meditation: Experiencing the Presence of God." His retreats and workshops welcome participants from all religious traditions. He is also a clinical psychologist in private practice in Santa Monica, Calif.

Finley will lead the weekend retreat, which will be followed by an optional five-day retreat guided by Manna House staff.

The cost, covering room and board at Manna House, is \$150 for the weekend or \$200 for the entire retreat.

To register or for information, call 785-243-4428 or email retreatcenter@mannahouse.org

Speaker uses her own life to talk about poverty's trap

When Donna Beegle tells her story, it sounds painfully familiar to those who work to address the causes of poverty in our country.

The child of poor parents, Donna dropped out of high school at 15.

By 25, she was the divorced an uneducated mother of two, facing homelessness.

Yet by 35, she had earned a Ph.D. and started her own business — and began telling her own story as a different way of helping people understand the reality of poverty.

"My education, my work, and my passion are to help people from all races who are trapped in poverty," Dr. Beegle explains. "I want them to have genuine options for lifelong success. This can only happen if the voices of those struggling with poverty can be heard and their perspectives understood."

That's part of the message she will bring to Concordia March 30, for a daytime workshop and an evening talk that is part of the Cook Lecture Series and open to the public without charge.

Details on the program are still being worked out. As information becomes available, it will be posted at csjkansas.org and made available to the Concordia Blade-Empire.

The local groups involved in bringing Dr. Beegle to Concordia include the Cloud County Community College, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia and the poverty small group from the ongoing community forums.



DONNA BEEGLE

Sisters' documentary to be shown in Salina

SALINA — The film documenting the lives of Catholic nuns behind the Iron Curtain will be shown twice this month in Salina.

"Interrupted Lives: Catholic Sisters Under European Communism," is a one-hour documentary researched and produced by Sisters

Margaret Nacke and Mary Savoie of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia.

After receiving funding from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the two produced the documentary with NewGroup Media of South Bend, Ind. It was released in September through the Vision & Values se-

ries on ABC television affiliates.

The Salina Arts Center Cinema will show the documentary at 10 a.m. and again at noon Saturday, Jan. 16. The cost is \$6. There are no advance ticket sales, but the theater at 150 S. Santa Fe seats 90 at each showing.

Upcoming Events

For information and cost for all workshops and retreats at Manna House of Prayer in Concordia, unless otherwise noted, email retreatcenter@mannahouse.org or call 785-243-4428.

► **Jan. 16**, 9:30 am-3:30 pm — "Winter Spirituality ... grace for living our winter days" at Manna House of Prayer. Come for a day of journaling, personal and communal prayer, input and the opportunity to sink into renewing silence. Presenters: Sisters Janet Lander and Liberata Pellerin.

► **Jan. 22-23** — "Quilting Retreat: X-Block" at Manna House. Both experienced quilters and those learning to quilt are welcome; you will need your own sewing machine and your own materials. Leader: Sister Betty Suther.

► **Feb. 12-14** — "Marriage Encounter," presented by the Salina Diocese at Manna House. Contact: familylife@salinadiocese.org or 785-827-5135.

► **Feb. 19-21** — "Quilting Retreat, Romantic Rose," Manna House. Both experienced quilters and those learning to quilt are welcome; you will need your own sewing machine and your own materials. Leader: Sister Betty Suther.

► **March 12-14** — "Quilting Retreat, Folded Fabric," Manna House. Both experienced quilters and those learning to quilt are welcome; you will need your own sewing machine and your own materials. Leader: Sister Betty Suther.

► **March 15-19** — "Understanding the Culture of Religious Life and Contributing to its Shifting Horizon," Manna House. Designed for lay professionals who serve religious congregations. Leaders include Mary Jo Nelson, a Our Lady of Victory Mission sister, and Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia Janet Lander and Carolyn Teter.

► **March 19**, 11 am-2 pm — Annual Spaghetti Dinner at the Nazareth Motherhouse; tickets in advance are \$8 for adults and \$4 for children; call 785-243-2113, ext. 1225, or email cgarcia@csjkansas.org to reserve tickets.

► **March 27**, 9:30 am-3:30 pm — "Guided Writing," Manna House. Come to this day of meditative writing to continue your awareness of life's experiences through this process. If you haven't kept a journal, this day will teach you how simple it is. Presenter: Sister Liberata Pellerin

► **April 17** — "Spring Spirituality: Greening Your Spirit," Manna House. This day will follow the format of our busy person's retreat day with prayer, input, reflective writing and a variety of spiritual exercises, from which to choose, including optional spiritual direction. Presenter: Sister Janet Lander



► **April 23-25** — "Come and See Retreat" at the Motherhouse. Contact: Sister Beverly Carlin, 785-220-7996 or srbevc@csjkansas.org

► **May 5-20** — "Falling In Love for a Lifetime," Manna House. This is a 15-day workshop/retreat that involves a study of the history origins, documents and spiritual heritage of the, Communities of St. Joseph tracing their history to the 17th century foundation in LePuy, France; it includes a silent retreat that begins May 14 and ends May 19. Presenters: Sister Barbara Baer (Congregation of St. Joseph) and Bette Moslander and Marcia Allen (both Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia).

► **May 14-19** — "The Eucharistic Letter Retreat," Manna House. This retreat closes the "Falling in Love for a Lifetime" program and may be made separately. Presenters: Sisters Marcia Allen and Bette Moslander

► **June 6-13** — "Creation as Revelation: Contemplating the Universe — Embracing the Earth," Manna House. Drawing on the insights of mystics, scientists and theologians, past and present, we will ponder God's design in creation, in order to respond to our human vocation within it. Presenter: Sister Janet Lander



► **June 17-19** — Discover Camp at the Nazareth Motherhouse, for girls entering sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grades. Contact: Sister Beverly Carlin, 785-220-7996 or srbevc@csjkansas.org

SISTER AGNES DREHER

BORN: Schoenchen, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 19, 1930

When I was a young girl, my family moved to Grainfield, Kan., where there was a St. Agnes parish, and the celebration of St. Agnes' Day in January was a special treat for me!

In 1930, when I entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, I received the religious name of Sister Mary Olivia, but I returned to my baptismal name as soon as that was possible.

Over these 80 years, I have served God's people in at least five states, in a wide range of ministries.

In 2004, I came home to the Motherhouse, and



Seventy years as a Sister of St. Joseph! What did I like best? I liked all of it. My life has been filled with countless blessings of community, family and friends, joys, sorrows, challenges, and all has been pure gift. How could I ever have deserved 70 years?

One theme that has dominated my life is: "What return can I make for all the good God has done for me?" How can I show my gratitude?

I want to use my remaining days in living and serving others, using any gift of body or soul with the quality of heart expressed in our Maxim 24: "Be utterly given to God by a holy self-surrender, utterly for God by a love pure and completely unselfish, ut-

terly in God striving to be ever more conscious of God's presence, utterly according to God by a will, a life and everything conformed to God."

Another theme I try to live by is: "O live the present moment." Each precious moment is all I have and all I need. God takes care of each breath and every desire that is holding me to this graced moment. Past, present, future!

I have found the deepest part of my soul as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia. I am grateful for our congregation's leadership through the years and our steadfast focus on the Gospel, the following of Jesus, the model for our spirituality, and our mission and ministry.

Thank you to all who have been companions on this journey.

— Written with assistance from Sister Clarene Kennedy



SISTER CELESTINE RUDER

BORN: Antonino, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: Aug. 14, 1935

Seventy-five years ago our Lord came and told me to follow him. So I came to the Motherhouse in Concordia and became a Sister of St. Joseph.

I entered in the days of the Dust Bowl, and it was often dark with red dust blowing in from Oklahoma.

My early ministries were in the kitchen, cooking first at our hospital in Sabetha, Kan., and then at Marymount College. I served in many, many school missions, including four years at the academy in Silver City, N.M., and a total of nine years in Junction City, Kan. If I named all the schools

where I served, this would be much too long!

I got to spend three years caring for my elderly parents, and I very grateful for that. I sent both of them to heaven.

After that, I changed ministries and served at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church and with the elderly at Good Samaritan Center, both in Hays.

In August 2005, I returned to the Motherhouse in Concordia. I thank the Lord for all these years; our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph continue to take care of me.

SISTER LIBERATA PELLERIN

BORN: Lake Linden, Mich.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1940



terly in God striving to be ever more conscious of God's presence, utterly according to God by a will, a life and everything conformed to God."

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SISTER MARIE COLEMAN

BORN: St. Marys, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1940

As we peer through the rising dawn
of a new kind of sister in service
as St. Joseph Sisters of Concordia,
we brace ourselves with rolled-up sleeves
and courageously move out to find
and help the dear neighbor.

Having already done that for 125 years,
we only need the grace of the Spirit,
who still continues to guide our way and helps
us love and care for all we encounter in
need: the marginalized, the immigrant,
the hungry and homeless masses.

Treasured particularly over these 70 years of CSJ
service are the many friends and acquaintances
we have come to so love and admire, who have
walked with us on our journey to our God.

Gratitude to God for you, dear sisters, we find so
overwhelmingly stunning, as to nearly mar our
bright vision, as we peer eagerly through
the ever hopeful, blazing rising dawn.

SISTER JACKIE KIRCHER

BORN: Escanaba, Mich.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1950

The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad indeed.

It is with great gratitude that I have lived in this community 60 years. I wish to thank all the sisters who made this life possible for me. Especially I wish to acknowledge my parents who taught me to persevere through all difficulties

SISTER VIATORA SOLBACH

BORN: Clifton, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1940

Mary Catherine Solbach was born Dec. 6, 1931, on a farm near Clifton, Kan. When she entered our community, she was given the religious name Sister Viatora.

Her primary focus seems to be one of gratitude, first to her family, who nurtured her early love of Jesus, and to the community that gave her so many opportunities for service — especially the initial founding of Manna House of Prayer in Clyde. Sister Vi enjoyed teaching as well as parish ministry, and she served in cities across Kansas and in Illinois. Her great love was service to the poor and the homeless, and her focus was very much on a sense of justice for the racial discrimination she perceived.

As Sister Viatora's health failed, the one great difficult move was to a care home. But this, too,

was a total acceptance to the call of service and obedience.

Today speech is very difficult, but the engaging smile that greets family and friends is the one welcoming feature of her love and friendship these past 70 years of ministry as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia.

Sister Viatora's life has been filled with joy, energy and prayerful reflection.

— Written by Sister Anne Martin Reinert



SISTER RITA ANN MAZANEC

BORN: Colby, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1950

My 60 years as a Sister of St. Joseph have been blessed with multiple opportunities to know God and his love, and the love we have for each other. All the joys and all the struggles have been honored with help from God and the persons who were put in place to be there to help.

My role in spreading the Gospel was as a primary teacher for 42 years, mainly teaching second-graders, which included preparing the students for First Communion and Reconciliation. This was a real privilege.

As I began to lose my hearing, I made the choice to leave the classroom to work in the library and tutor students in reading and math. Working with an average of four students at a time was a more workable situation for me. I did this for six years.

Progressively my hearing worsened; therefore it was time to retire from teaching. I came to Concordia and worked at the Motherhouse wherever there was a need.

Then Sister Jeanette Wasinger asked if I would take on the job of bookkeeper here at the Motherhouse and help the sisters learn about computers and email. Computers were a new experience for more than 30 sisters. But we all persevered through it, with the help of Doug Herman (currently treasurer and human resources director). Ten years later, some may think I am an expert, but the truth is I am still "bookkeeping- and computer-confused."



SISTER LILA MARIE SCHMIDT

BORN: Pfeifer, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1950

I was born July 4, 1933, the eighth of 13 children born to Catherine Breit Schmidt and George J. Schmidt on a farm near Pfeifer, Kan. I had a very loving mother, and my father was very strict. I was very close to my six brothers and six sisters.

At 16, I came to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kan. I was too young to fully understand the steps I had taken, but I always liked to work and I liked people so I got along real well. I had a great respect for my superiors and loved every one of them. Mother Helena, who was superior of the house when I entered, had a big influence on my life. She sent me out to help in a hospital kitchen right after I came out of the novitiate at the age of 18. By the time I was 20, I was in full charge of the kitchen in

our hospital in Belvedere, Ill.

When Vatican II came along, it opened a whole new horizon for me, and I volunteered for the Jesuit Missions at the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations in South Dakota.

I loved my work at the Missions and stayed there for five years. Eventually I spent time in St. Louis, Mo., and then settled in Salina, Kan. It was there that I got interested in doing home care for the elderly in St. John's Hospital and in their homes. I liked my work and stayed with it for about eight years.

In May 1995, I started thinking about my own semi-retirement and moved to our Motherhouse in Concordia. I have done everything that I wanted to do in my life. The rest is up to God.



SISTER THERESE RICHSTATTER

BORN: Clay Center, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1950

I find it hard to believe that 60 years have passed since I entered the community of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. They have been happy and grace-filled years that went by so quickly.

I enjoyed the years spent in teach-

ing, religious education and library work.

Now the pace of my life is slower. I am involved in various little ministries here at the Motherhouse.

I feel privileged to spend my retirement years here at the Motherhouse,

where I have more time for prayer and contemplation.

I appreciate having the chapel, daily Mass and eucharistic adoration where I live.

I have been so blessed during my years in religious life.

SISTER ALICE MARIE STALKER

BORN: Aurora, Ill.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1950

My first encounter with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia began when my father enrolled me in second grade at Sacred Heart School in Aurora, Ill., taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph. I went with him and was seated in the dark chapel while a sister and my father discussed business in the next room. It was very dark but I wasn't afraid. I watched the sanctuary light splash golden rays on the

tabernacle. I knew Jesus was there like at church. I had been told these ladies work to bring good news of Jesus to children and others.

From that experience and later being taught by them, I had a desire to be a sister one day. I had a deep admiration of these sisters as I observed the energy, love, care and patience that was showered on those in their care. They were a God-like presence in my life. It

was this that guided my decision to be a Sisters of St. Joseph.

As I matured, this desire grew in me. It's 60 wonderful years on this journey with God who loves me and knows me. I'm part of the community of the Sisters of St. Joseph, which challenges and encourages me in my hopes and dreams.

I pray God gives me the grace to journey on until I rest in his arms.



SISTER RITA PLANTE

BORN: Juneau, Alaska.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1960

“Live out your life with one desire only: to be always what God wants you to be, in nature, grace and glory, for time and for eternity.”

— Maxim 73 of the Little Institute



Even though I didn't know it, this maxim of the Original Sisters of St. Joseph and of today was being taught to me through out my life.

At age 11 in sixth grade, I was pretty sure of my vocation — even though I was always adventuresome, loud and in trouble a lot.

After graduating from high school in Colorado Springs, Colo., I was ready to enter the convent. My dad's parting words were, “You'll be back in a couple of months for three reasons: you can't keep your mouth shut, you can't obey, and you're too stubborn.”

Unknown to Dad, these were the keys that kept me in religious life — to always be what God wanted me to be, in nature, grace and glory, to be who I am in my nature:

▶▶ To be stubborn, which is also steadfast and faithful;

▶▶ To be noisy, to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord,” the psalmist says; and

▶▶ To obey, which I could do, if I knew the rules.

For all this I needed a lot of God's grace.

These 50 years haven't all been easy but they have been very exciting. I have taught primary grades, lived and worked with the mentally and physically challenged in LArche and I am now administrator of St. Mary's Spirituality Center in Silver City, N.M., and volunteer chaplain at our local hospital.

At the time when people at my age are winding down, I seem to be rewinding with more energy than ever before, more creativity, more full of — to use a term that Father Neper, who studied our origins, used — “Hot Zeal” for the mission of Jesus.

And for all this I say “thank you” to all who have been part of this journey.

SISTER MARY JEAN ASSELL

BORN: Aurora, Ill.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1950

Sixty years – WOW!

It is hard to believe that I have been a Sister of St. Joseph for 60 years. They have been excellent years of teaching first- and second-graders.

For the last 28 years I worked as a religious education coordinator in Grand Island, Neb., and Burlington and West Burlington, Iowa.

While teaching in Burlington, I enjoyed time visiting my mother, sister and other relatives in Aurora, Ill. My mother also came to Burlington and would stay for a month twice a year, which was a real joy for me.

One day I asked Mother this question: How many times would Daddy have come to see me now that I am in Burlington? Mother answered, “Oh, he probably would have come every weekend!”

Mother died in 1996, and I was with her in the hospital the morning she passed away. God allowed me to be with both of my parents when they died.

SISTER LEO FRANCES WINBINGER

BORN: Cuba, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1950

Sister Leo Francis Winbinger is now approaching this grand moment of celebrating 60 years as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia. It's a very special moment to celebrate and to recall special steppingstones that led to this exceptional occasion.

She was born Theresa Elizabeth Winbinger on June 18, 1930. Her early life was devoted to music, and she sang and learned to play a variety of instruments.

Those gifts led in time to a scholarship to attend Marymount College. It was there during her first semester that she recognized the call to religious life and entered the community.

Sister Leo Francis taught on various missions and continued her college studies, mostly in the summer, until she graduated from Marymount on May 26, 1963.

While music was important throughout her life, the joy of being a “jack of all trades” and helping wherever she could provided the most treasured times.

Throughout her years of teaching, Leo Francis served in Herndon, Manhattan, Plainville, Salina and Tipton, Kan., as well as Revenna, Neb.; Boonville, Mo.; Silver City, N.M.; Chicago, Ill.; and Gladstone, Mich.

She also served in a variety of “fill-in” posts

When I left Burlington, I went to live at Medaille Center in Salina, Kan. I enjoyed living there for three years with sisters who also had retired. We received word from the Motherhouse the Center would be closed so most of us moved to the Motherhouse.

Living at the Motherhouse has been great for me. I am able to volunteer to help with the elderly sisters, take communion to the sick and work at the main desk.

I give thanks to God for allowing me 60 years to spend as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia.



at Marymount and the Motherhouse.

Illness brings its limitations, as it has for Leo Francis, and it is through this reflective mirror the beauty of this sister shines through.

She always has a welcoming greeting and gratitude for those who care for her at Mount Joseph.

She looked forward to living at Mount Joseph, noting that her mother had received care there years earlier. She has said that living there is a blessing.

The one highlight that keeps her focused on prayer today is a statue of the Little Infant Jesus of Prague, which she keeps in a place of honor in her room.

When asked what she would like written for her 60th Jubilee, Sister Leo Francis responded without hesitation: “Thank the Lord that he asked me to come to him.”



— Written by Sister Anne Martin Reinert

SISTER JEANNE McKENNA

BORN: Kingman, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1960

My father was a teacher, and both of my parents considered education to be highly important. Eight older siblings read to me and taught me important lessons.

At age 27 I reluctantly decided I wanted to do something important with my life, so I wrote Mother Helena asking to join my sister, Michael Ann, and other friends who were Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. Every day of formation was both a struggle and an adventure! At wake-up bell, I told myself that I should make arrangements to leave. But then I always became so intrigued with my charges and teaching that I forgot about making those arrangements.

Sister Mary Mark asked Mother Helena to send me to St. Louis University for a graduate degree. After five years I returned to Marymount College to teach history. The wonderful faculty and staff there were daily inspirations. I seldom

woke up in the morning and wondered if I needed to reconsider my vocation.

Sisters Bette Moslander and Christella Buser and all subsequent presidents encouraged my participation in justice organizations, and that has given me the chance to experience ministry situations that were not in the classroom. Whatever the ministry, I always had the opportunity to teach.

Fifty years have passed quickly. I am the last of my siblings to be alive. I have experienced the loss of many good friends. I am encouraged by the energy I find in Refounding. It has been a life of much rejoicing and gratitude.

When I was a substitute in a Catholic high school, a faculty member asked me what I had learned during my 21 years of Catholic education. I said that it had taught me I had been gifted with an inquiring mind, and that I was required to use it.



My entire life has been an opportunity to use this gift. My life has been a jubilee!



SISTER VERONICA ANN BAXA

BORN: Cuba, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1960

Prayer is and always has been an important part of my life.

Before I was born, my father prayed for a daughter and that she become a nun. When I was growing up our family would kneel in the kitchen after supper every night and pray the rosary. The rosary is still important in my prayer life.

The Sisters of St. Joseph taught Vacation School for two weeks every summer at St. Isadore's Church in Cuba, Kan., and one of the sisters there encouraged me to go to the Apostolic

School at the Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia. I went there my four years of high school and entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on Sept. 8, 1959. I became a Sister of St. Joseph on March 18, 1960.

My 50 years as a Sister of St. Joseph have been grace-filled years for me. I was at Marymount College and worked in the laundry; then I worked at St. Joseph's Children's Home in Salina, Nazareth Motherhouse for 23 years and then Park Villa in Clyde. Presently I

work at the Good Samaritan Society in Minneapolis, Kan. Being of service to God's people is very rewarding.

Thank you, God, for my vocation as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia and for walking by my side during these past 50 years. I am grateful for my family, the sisters of my community and friends who have prayed for me, supported me and encouraged me. With great pride and joy I celebrate 50 years as a Sister of St. Joseph. God bless you all!



SISTER BETTY MASCHKA

BORN: Ashton, Neb.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1960

Fifty years as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia! What a wonderful gift from God!

As I was reflecting on what this means to me, I was reminded of something that I posted on the bulletin board in my room. Written by Pedro Arrupe, SJ, it expresses my feelings:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way... It will decide when you will get out of bed in the morning, what you will do with you evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

My experience of these past 50 years has been that of falling in love with the God who called me to live the life of a Sister of St. Joseph and who has allowed me to experience God's love for me in so many ways.

These experiences of God's love include the support of my parents and siblings throughout this life, the Concordia Sisters of St. Joseph and so many other people who have become a part of my life, the ministries I have been involved in, the profound sorrows that have broken my heart, the profound joys that have lifted and amazed me and the retreats and spiritual opportunities that have been offered to me.

I am grateful to God beyond words because I know that I have been richly blessed with love. My deep desire is to always stay in love with the God of my heart and life.

SISTER BETH STOVER

BORN: Beloit, Kan.

ENTERED CONGREGATION: March 18, 1960

When my parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, I was awestruck that two persons could make a commitment to be faithful to one another for half a century! However, I lived in a home filled with love and a generous spirit that often meant sacrifice and giving of self for others. Their faith and love of God directed their lives and mine. These were the lessons and values that made their lives strong. The same have carried me through life to celebrate this 50th jubilee as a Sister of St. Joseph.

Religious life was part of my everyday "growing up" with Sister Angela, my great-aunt, and Sister Rose, my aunt, visiting at home or at the Motherhouse in Concordia, as well as my uncle, Father Jim Grennan, being present for special occasions.

My education was influenced by the Sisters of St. Joseph at St. John's in Beloit. Even though Sister Rose said "one of Mike and Marie's daughters would surely be a Sister," I flatly declared, "Not me!"

That changed, however, in my senior year when Sister Margaret Therese said, "Beth, you have a vocation and just don't want to admit it." I could hardly believe my spontaneous response: "You're right."

Fifty years later, I am filled with gratitude and heartfelt joy

for my life as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia. Our congregation has given me the opportunity to be educated, to be immersed in the faith, to be of service to the "dear neighbor" and to make a difference in others lives by sharing gifts and talents for God's greater honor and glory.

This joyous occasion has only one sadness. Sister Colleen, my sister, my companion and support in religious life for 50 years, is not here to celebrate. She is celebrating our Golden Jubilee in heaven, probably with a toast:

"Here's to our Band of '59. Let's celebrate 'cause I think we're really fine!"



IRMÃ JOSELEIDE DA SILVA NEVES

BORN: Aroeiras, Teresina, Piauí, Brazil

ENTERED CONGREGATION: Feb. 17, 1985

It is with great joy that I celebrate this moment and share a little of my religious journey of these years of dedication.

I became a postulant in 1983. It was a year of becoming better

acquainted with the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. This experience strengthened my vocation. Then my experiences as a novice, beginning in 1985, renewed my belief that it is possible to walk the

path with persistence and courage that comes from Jesus Christ. Even though our reality today is challenging, the Gospel is our rule of life.

Two years later I had the joy of pronouncing my vows, in which I felt more committed in the mission that was entrusted to me through religious life.

The first years of my formation were in the Formation House in the Buenos Aires district of Teresina, which was the area where I was raised. Being so near to my family became a great challenge and test of my vocation but proved also to be a strength for me.

In 1996, I pronounced final vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. This was a year of renewal of religious life and confirmation of the commitment to the mission that I had chosen with the help of the congregation and through the sisters who witnessed to me the charism and spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

To celebrate this jubilee is a recommitment to a life that I began 25 years ago. It is a reaffirmation with the same enthusiasm with which I began the journey.

I desire to continue serving God through religious life in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, embracing our charism of simplicity and *unidade*.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶▶ The first Daughters of St. Joseph congregation was formed in about 1650 in LePuy, France.
- ▶▶ The first Sisters of St. Joseph came to the U.S. in 1836.
- ▶▶ Sisters of St. Joseph from Rochester, N.Y., arrived in Newton, Kan., in 1883.
- ▶▶ Since the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia was founded in 1884, there have

- been 1,133 women who entered the congregation.
- ▶▶ There are some 19 separate congregations and provinces of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the U.S. and Canada.
- ▶▶ Worldwide, there are 52 congregations and provinces of the Sisters of St. Joseph.
- ▶▶ Sisters of St. Joseph serve in at least 55 countries worldwide.

- ▶▶ Today, there are about 140 sisters in the Concordia congregation.
- ▶▶ Those sisters from Concordia live and serve in 17 cities and town in Kansas, plus nine other states and in Brazil.
- ▶▶ In the U.S., there are about 7,000 Sisters of St. Joseph today.
- ▶▶ Worldwide, there are some 14,000 Sisters of St. Joseph today.

CELEBRATING OUR JUBILIANS!