



# 2011 Jubilarians



**A**s we began our celebration of our 2011 Jubilees — the special anniversary marking when each Sisters of St. Joseph was received into the congregation — we asked each jubilarian this question:

*As you look back on your years as a Sister of St. Joseph, what experience, incident or event best captures what your religious life means to you? (And why?)*

Below and on the following eight pages are the responses from these remarkable yet humble women who together represent 850 years of service and ministry, and who continue to serve God and the dear neighbor every day of their lives.

## Sister Margaret Ann Buser

**A**fter 45 years of teaching, broken only by a six-year stint as Secretary General of the congregation, I was asked by Bishop Lawrence McNamara in Grand Island, Neb., to try a whole new ball game: working in the Marriage Tribunal.

I didn't know the first thing about it, and I told him I'd pray about it — but then I called Sister Mary Savoie to tell her there was an opening and to see if there was a sister we could put there. I was so excited when she told me she knew a sister who would be good at it. When I asked her who it was, she said, "You!"

I gave God every excuse I could muster, but he assured me he would lead me. I still hear in my heart the words that came to me then: "I will be with you."

I ministered in the Tribunal for 11 years, and I loved that ministry as much, or maybe more, than teaching. In my time there, we handled probably 600 annulments. I knew I was helping people who

were mixed up. I knew I was there to help them untie some of the tangles they had made in their lives.

My own life was enriched a hundred-fold as I listened with my heart to the brokenness these people had suffered in their lives.

As I look back on my 75 years as a

Sister of St. Joseph, I thank God for my beloved parents, four sisters and a brother who have preceded me to heaven, and for my two younger sisters, Danetta and Mary Angela, who are enjoying retirement days as Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary at their Motherhouse in Dubuque, Iowa.



**BORN:** Halstead, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** March 19, 1936

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** BA, Marymount College; MA, Notre Dame University

**MINISTRIES:**

1937-60: High school teacher in Tipton, Beloit, Aurora, Junction City and Salina, Kan.; Silver City, N.M.; and Grand Island, Neb.

1960-65: English instructor at Marymount College

1965-71: Secretary General for the congregation

1971-82: High school teacher in Manhattan, Kan., and Grand Island, Neb.

1982-93: Marriage Tribunal work in the Grand Island Diocese

1994-2004: Stephen Ministry in Grand Island

2004-present: Motherhouse ministry, "just helping out wherever I am needed."



**AT LEFT:** Sister Margaret Ann Buser, who celebrated her 94th birthday in December, looks through one of the many scrapbooks documenting her 75 years as a Sister of St. Joseph.

# Sister Rose Moos

I was teaching at the Curé of Ars School in Leawood, Kan. (about 31 or 32 years ago).

Before we could have a 30-day retreat, we had to have a directed seven-day retreat. I attended a conference in Kansas City, and then wanted a 30-day retreat. I found one in Hales Corner, Wis., at a monastery.

The first week of the retreat was blah, I have to say! Then we got to the gospel story of the Annunciation (when the archangel Gabriel visited Mary to tell her that she would give birth to a son and would name him Jesus).

I was meditating on the words of the Gospel and all of a sudden I wasn't there; I was with our Blessed Mother when the angel came to her. I was transported, not aware of the sounds or sights around me. I wasn't a part of the scene, but I was nearby, witnessing it. It wasn't like observing stage actors; it was as though I was just standing apart from the Blessed Mother and the angel as they met.

I don't know how long it was, but half an hour at least. Then I became aware it was time for Mass, and I began to



feel my surroundings again.

Throughout the rest of the retreat, every time we had meditation — three times a day and then at midnight — I was there again, as though I was a “friend of the family” witnessing what happened in the life of Jesus.

This was a special grace, a gift from God, and it has always stayed with me.

**BORN:** Hays, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** March 19, 1941

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** BS, Marymount College; MS, St. Mary College, Leavenworth

**MINISTRIES:**

1945-71: Taught school in Kansas, New Mexico and Nebraska

1971-87: School librarian in Leawood and Salina, Kan.

1987-89: Cared for mother until her death.

1989-94: Taught religious education and served as religious education coordinator; served as a senior companion in Wakeeny, Kan.

1994-97: Served at St. Mary's Convent as assistant to the administrator

1997-present: Motherhouse ministry, sewing for sisters and helping as needed



**AT LEFT:** Sister Rose Moos spends hours at the sewing machine in the third floor Sun Room at the Motherhouse, mending and sewing for other sisters. On one December morning, she was mending a pair of slacks for Sister Viatora Solbach.

**BORN:** El Paso, Texas

**RECEIVED:** March 19, 1941

**CURRENT HOME:** El Paso, Texas

**EDUCATION:** BA, Marymount College; MA, Notre Dame University; post-graduate studies at the University of Nebraska, Colorado State University and the Instituto Iberoamericanos in Saltillo, Mexico

**MINISTRIES:**  
1943-72: Taught school in Pfeifer, Park, Salina, Sequin and Junction City, Kan.; Boonville, Mo.; and Grand Island, Neb.

1972-80: Art teacher for the occupational therapy unit at St. Joseph's Hospital, El Paso, Texas.

1973-87: Operated The Madonna Shop Catholic bookstore and worked as an artist

1988-present: Artist in Residence in the El Paso Diocese, working in encaustic paintings, acrylics, sculpture and jewelry.

# Sister Marquita Murguia



Years ago I went into a store to buy a small radio. There was a man behind the counter. Assuming he worked there, I asked about a radio. I was not prepared for his response: “I don't work here. I'm getting ready to kill myself.”

I was stunned but quickly regained my composure, said a fervent prayer, and asked him why.

“God hates me,” he said, “because I killed a lot of people.”

Rather than being frightened by that statement, the Holy Spirit nudged me to ask him if he had been in the military. He said that he had and that God hated him because of what he had done.

I took the time to talk with him and let him know that God understood he was doing what was asked of him at that time. I shared

with him God's deep love and abundant mercy. He began to believe what I was saying and started to relax. We talked a while longer and he said that he thought he was going to be fine. (I don't remember if I ever got the radio or not!)

Many situations like that — being a reconciler between God and people — have happened to me. I am able to do that because I get strength and support from my community. I appreciate my sisters. Because of them, my faith life has deepened, I am able to be of service anywhere and anytime, and I find joy in life.

I'm grateful to mentors I've had along the way and to the various missions I've had but the essence of religious life for me is the joy in being able to follow God without reservation.

**AT RIGHT:** Sister Marquita Murguia focuses her attention on her most recent sculpture in her studio at her home in El Paso, Texas.

# Sister Cecilia Green

**A** dream that I had from the time I entered the Sisters of St. Joseph 60 years ago was to live and work at the Motherhouse. That dream came true in 1976 when I was invited to minister here in several arenas. Prior to that, I enjoyed my teaching career. I have not regretted this move to the Motherhouse since it opened so many new avenues of ministry.

Living at the Motherhouse provided opportunities to share my talents and serve others in many ways. One of the consistent needs at the Motherhouse is the ministry of transportation, as most sisters do not drive. I provided that service for 10 years.

A few other services I enjoy doing are painting rooms, gardening, mowing the lawn, decorating with others and providing hospitality for guests at the Motherhouse and our guest house on State Street.

One thing that has been a constant is caring for Milford Lodge. It gave me the

opportunity to keep up the house and yard so others could enjoy being there.

Craft work has been a constant part of my life. I enjoy being creative and I focus on woodworking, crocheting and bobbin lacemaking, just to name a few.

Working in the garden and the yard have been favorite places to beautify. I especially enjoy planting flowers and caring for the Lourdes Grotto at the Motherhouse. It provides space for me to contemplate the beauty of nature.

Last but not least of my favorite services is being the Motherhouse sacristan. This provides an opportunity to have quiet time in the chapel as well as doing seasonal decorating and whatever is needed to provide a sacred environment for prayer and contemplation.

I have appreciated expressions of sup-



**BORN:** Herndon, Kan.  
**RECEIVED:** March 19, 1951  
**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia  
**EDUCATION:** BA, Marymount College  
**MINISTRIES:**  
 1954-75: Taught school in Clyde, Beloit, Tipton, Damar, Park, Junction City and Manhattan, Kan.  
 1975-76: Parish ministry in Leoville, New Alamo, Logan, Densmore and Oberlin, Kan.  
 1977-present: Motherhouse ministry, serving as sacristan and in many other ways: driver, mail carrier, maintenance, gardening and decorating for special events and holidays.



**AT LEFT:** Sister Cecilia Green hones her skills in a bobbin lacemaking retreat at Manna House of Prayer in August 2010.

port, encouragement, and a sense of belonging and love through the years.

**BORN:** Seguin, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** March 19, 1951

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** Nursing certification, Kansas Alcoholism Counselors Association

**MINISTRIES:**

1952-83: Nurse in hospitals in Manhattan, Kan., El Paso, Texas, and Concordia  
 1985-2002: Nurse in Junction City, Kan., at St. Clare



House for Women and Children and at the hospital

2002-06: Nurse at Motherhouse in Concordia

2008-present: Community life coordinator for sisters living at Mt. Joseph Senior Village.

# Sister Anne Martin Reinert

**I** am constantly molded and remolded in my efforts to grow as a woman in a religious community that strives to love God and neighbor.

Maxim 27 seems to mirror my writing: "Seek out the interior and hidden life of Jesus in so far as the activities of zeal allow..."

I was encouraged early in life to go into nursing. After entering the Sisters of St. Joseph, I did general floor nursing in a small hospital, so I had my community of sisters living in or near the hospital.

I had much to learn, and my education came from the newborn who could not wait but was thrust forth from the womb into my arms, the toddler who could bring me to tears over a dose of medicine and the elderly man who could drive me to frustration one moment and to a celebration of joy the next.

Then there was a change of mission and I left the beautiful green Flint Hills of Manhattan, Kan., for a long train ride to the desert of El Paso, Texas. Then another move, back to Concordia and to general floor nursing.

My heart strings stretched with the introduction of a chemical dependency unit. Each success was celebrated with the pride of motherhood, as we shared spiritual growth through Bill W. and AA and Alanon support.

Again I celebrated the cherished moments those we served had to offer. There is wisdom in suffering souls.



Now as I am slowing down, I serve as "community life coordinator at Mt. Joseph" to our sisters who live there. Or, more likely, it is my showing up that allows our dear sisters to reach out in service to me.

**AT RIGHT:** Sister Anne Martin Reinert steadies Sister Agnes Dreher as they begin a walk at Mount Joseph Senior Village one afternoon in December.

**BORN:** Clayton, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** Aug. 15, 1951

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** AB, Marymount College; individualized mathematics, Dayton (Ohio) University; developmental reading, San Francisco College for Women; Mid-America Montessori Teacher

Preparation Center, Kansas City

**MINISTRIES:**

1953-95:

Taught first grade and primary grades in Chicago; Concordia, Manhattan, Junction City,



Herndon, Oakley and Plainville, Kan.; and El Paso, Texas; began Montessori kindergartens in Leawood and Salina, Kan.

1996-2004: Religious Education Coordinator in Plainville, Kan.

2005-present: Motherhouse ministry, including giving tours, leading the Rosary and Litany, distributing mail, preparing food trays for sisters, helping with recycling, handcrafting items for the Nazareth Gift Shop and many other duties as needed.

**AT RIGHT:** Each April Concordia fourth-graders tour the Motherhouse, and Sister Francis Margaret Otter always proves to be an informative and entertaining guide.



## Sister Francis Margaret Otter

**L**ittle did I realize when I was young that I would be glorifying God by still praising him in the chanting of Psalm 150 as I celebrate my 60th Jubilee as a Sister of St. Joseph:

*Praise! Praise God in his sanctuary.*

*Praise him in the firmament of his strength.*

*Praise! Praise God's mighty deeds and sovereign majesty.*

(and the Psalm goes on)

There was something beautiful in observing and being with the Sisters of St. Joseph in New Almelo, Kan., in the late 1930s. They brought joy, laughter and a sense of invitation to me as a student. I wanted to be one of them and to teach children.

That early wishful desire never left me nor did God forget about me. After entering the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia, I finished my postulate, novitiate and year of studies at Marymount College in Salina. Then came ministry. I was assigned to Chicago. I traveled on

the Rock Island from Belleville, Kan., to Chicago with a group of sisters and having arrived, I was shown to my room, unpacked, and was then assigned to a classroom of 50 first-graders. Oh, yes, God, I wanted to teach, but I forgot to mention to you the number! Fortunately, I had two experienced first-grade sisters who taught the other two rooms of 50 children each. Sisters Francis Joseph Hoover and Eugene (Margaret) Jilka gave me lots of help in planning lessons.

My mission work lasted until 1995 when I retired to the Motherhouse. Here I do many other ministry works. As one sister said, "Retired, no; just recycled."

God has been very good to me in my 60 years of religious life, and I thank him, my parents, brothers and sisters and my community and all who have missioned with me. I continue to pray Psalm 150 and praise God for a life of great peace, joy, prayer and mission to the dear neighbor.

## Sister Leah Smith

**W**hat is a Requiem Mass? Most younger people don't have any idea.

It was the Mass of the dead, and was said with the priest in black vestments.

When it came time for my final vows, in 1956, the chaplain at the Motherhouse had promised to say a Requiem Mass for someone and he would not change his schedule just because I was making my profession.

I may have been unhappy with his inflexibility — but then I realized that I would be the only Sister of St. Joseph to make her profession with a Requiem Mass, and I was proud of that fact.

I made a pact with the poor



souls in that Mass that I would pray for them daily if they saw to it that I would be able, God willing, to contin-

ue my entire lifetime with the Sisters of St. Joseph. So far, so good — and my life will end with a Mass said for me.

**BORN:** Junction City, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** March 19, 1951

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** BA, Marymount College; MGA, International Graphoanalysis Society, Chicago

**MINISTRIES:**

1953-74: Taught school in Salina, Kan.; Chicago; Silver City, N.M.; Gladstone and Lake Linden, Mich.; and Grand Island, Neb.; served as a cook in Tipton, Kan.

1974-80: Receptionist at the Motherhouse

1980: St. Joseph's Hospital, physical therapy, Concordia



**AT LEFT:** Sister Leah Smith, center, joins Sisters Susan Stoeber, Jackie Kircher and Cecilia Green each year making the hundreds of items available at the Motherhouse Annual Crafts Sale the Saturday after Thanksgiving. At this year's sale, Sisters Leah and Susan, right, staffed the "cashier's table" amid all the hubbub of the event.

**BORN:** Hays, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** Aug. 15, 1951

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** Nursing certificate, Marymount College



**MINISTRIES:**

1955-89: Nurse at hospitals in Salina, Atwood, Concordia and Manhattan, Kan.; and Belvidere, Ill.  
1989-91: Spokane, Wash.

1991-93: Nurse in Grand Island, Neb.

1996-2005: Nurse at St. Mary's Convent and Nazareth Motherhouse, Concordia.

2005: Nurse in Silver City, N.M.

2006-08: Nurse at Nazareth Motherhouse

2008-present: Motherhouse ministry, serving as a part-time receptionist

## Sister Geraldine Milke

**W**hen I graduated from high school, I received a scholarship to Marymount College. When I told my father, his response was, "You are going to be a nun."

My response? "Not me!"

During first semester at Marymount we had a weekend retreat by Father Frank from Chicago. There were many pamphlets here and there, with titles like "Should my daughter be a nun?" I never picked them up because I thought I probably would get married. My brother teased me that I would have 10 children.

During that weekend I was walking outside one afternoon when I heard God's call to be a nun. I went to bed to sleep it off, but when I awakened it was still there so I pursued my call.

I delight in my awareness of being "called." My request to be a nurse was honored. I served in four of our hospitals. Much of my time was spent in charge of surgery and emergency rooms, also some floor duty. Being intuitive, I had a sense when a patient was dying.



My favorite Scripture is Micah 6:8, "This is what the Lord asks of you: Only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God."

Also important to me is Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare not for your woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope."

**AT RIGHT:** Sister Geraldine Milke takes over the reception desk at the Nazareth Motherhouse on a December afternoon.

## Sister Rosalyn Juenemann

**A**s I look back on my years as a Sister of St. Joseph, the rose symbolizes best what religious life means to me.

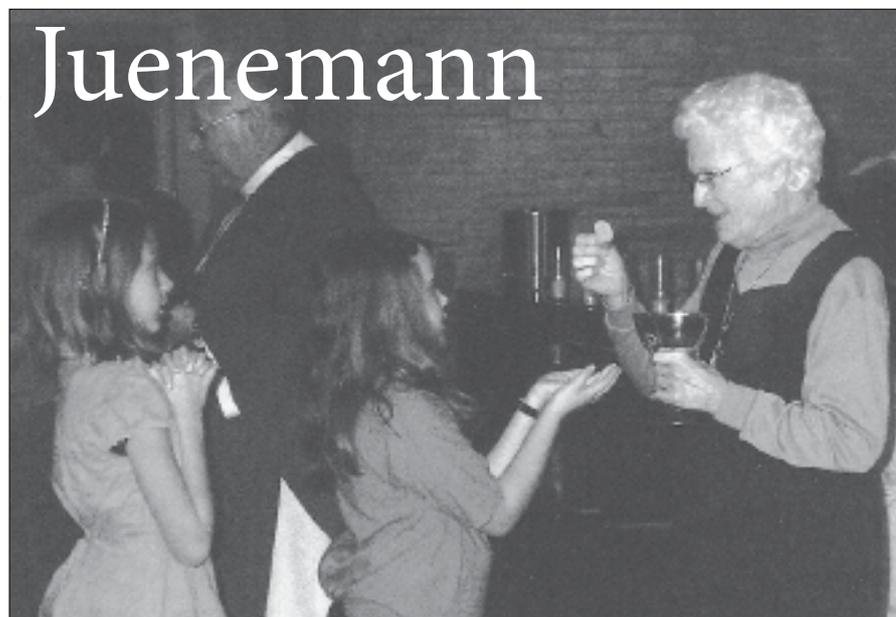
When I started my religious life, I was just a bud well hidden but with potential I knew very little about. Through prayer, experiencing living in community and interacting with God's people, the bud became fuller and then began to open little by little.

The major happening that began to open me was Vatican II and the challenge to look at our roots, making changes accordingly. The Spirit has been very alive calling us to the more. Renewal called for us to look at every aspect of our life.

That was a real testing time that challenged me to earnestly ask myself, "What is it that really makes me a sister?" Not my clothes, not certain kinds of prayer, not the work I do, but who am I called to be through prayer, communion with God and service. It has to

come from within in a spirit of love. My call to do parish ministry was the means that led me deeper. My first years working outside the structured school system were a challenge that stretched me to risk and trust the movements of the spirit within.

Parish ministry has called me to be more fully who I am and how God wants me to serve. Each day is a new and challenging experience. I may have a plan of what I think ought to be done but the need of the neighbor some-



times changes the whole day or direction of the day. Beneath all this the foundation of prayer is an absolute necessity, prayer always and everywhere in the midst of the active life that calls me to be what we say we are, "Contemplatives in Action."

May God lead all of us to reach our fullness in beauty just as the rose at its fullest peak of life.

**BORN:** Leoville, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** March 19, 1951

**CURRENT HOME:** Plainville, Kan.

**EDUCATION:** BME, Marymount College; MS, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia

**MINISTRIES:**

1953-73: Taught school in Antonino, Pfeifer, Salina, Gorham, Plainville and Oakley, Kan; and Chicago.

1973: Pastoral ministry in Glenwood Springs, Colo.

1976: Pastoral ministry in Greenleaf, Kan.

1983: Pastoral ministry in Clay Center, Kan.

1987: Coordinator of Sisters' Services at the Motherhouse

1991-94: Elected to congregation's Executive Council

1996: Pastoral associate in Colby, Kan.

1999-2005: Parish ministry in Junction City and Chapman, Kan.

2006-present: Prayerful presence in Plainville, Kan.



**AT LEFT:** Sister Rosalyn Juenemann serves as a eucharistic minister during a recent Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Plainville, Kan.

# Sister Carmella Thibault

In the early 1980s while serving at Manna House of Prayer in Concordia, an event that had a strong impact is still fresh in my mind. Thirteen of us were living there, including four novices and Mary K. Meyer, a good friend.

One line of our Manna House Mission Statement read: "We will open our hearts and hands to those in need." We did just that by welcoming those coming to our door, tending to their needs — a meal, a bed, clean clothing, etc.

One day a letter arrived from a Mennonite friend in Newton, Kan., asking if we would consider becoming part of the Sanctuary Movement that had been initiated by church groups "to welcome and provide a safe place for refugees fleeing from their homes in Central America where wars were raging, people being tortured and killed, and the land scorched and plundered."

As a community we considered the request. Many questions arose as we prayed and discerned; there were many

unknowns: How can we be Sanctuary along with being a retreat center? How many will come? What about the IRS?

Finally we said YES, trusting that God would be with us. Then we waited and ... waited!

Many months later, word came that a family would be arriving soon. We were so excited!

One evening a van arrived and we welcomed the Guatemalan family we would come to know and love: Armando and Rosario, their son, Roberto; their daughter, Guadalupe and her husband,

Miguel; and Guadalupe and Miguel's 9-month-old daughter, Veronica!

What a journey had begun for all of us! Our worlds, our hearts were expanded by these "dear neighbors."

Looking back I see that active, inclusive love was at work — the core of our lives as Sisters of St. Joseph.



**BORN:** Damar, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** Aug. 15, 1961

**CURRENT HOME:** Salina

**EDUCATION:** BA, Marymount College; certificate, Mental Health Institute, Independence, Iowa; diploma, Institute of Religious Formation at St. Louis University

**MINISTRIES:**

1962-69: Registrar's Office, Marymount College

1969-80: Taught school in Leawood, Kan., and Fairbury, Neb.

1981-91: Congregational vocation duties, including Director of Novices, Director of Formation Program and Director of Temporary Profession, at Manna House of Prayer, Concordia.

1992-95: Staff member, Manna House

1995-2003: Executive Council and regional coordinator

2004-present: Pastoral minister at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Salina



**AT LEFT:** Sister Carmella Thibault begins a December morning in her office at Salina's Sacred Heart Cathedral, making arrangements to visit elderly, ill and homebound parishioners throughout the rest of the day.

**BORN:** Walker, Kan.

**RECEIVED:** Aug. 15, 1961

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** BMuEd, Marymount College; MA in Liturgy and Religious Studies, Mundelein College, Chicago; additional studies at Indiana and Notre Dame universities



**MINISTRIES:**

1963-68: Music teacher in St. George, Ill., and Park, Kan.

1968-71: Area Religion Coordinator for northwestern and western Kansas parishes

1971-73: Religious Education Office, Salina Diocese

1973-75: Religious education coordinator and music teacher in Manhattan, Kan.

1975-77: Team ministry in Selden, Leoville, Oberlin, New Alamo, Logan and Densmore, Kan.

1977-78: Campus ministry and organ instructor, Marymount College.

1979-88: Office of Worship, Salina Diocese.

1989-94: Pastoral associate and music director at St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, Salina.

1994-2005: Pastoral associate and music director in Manhattan and Ogden, Kan.

2005-07: Nazareth Motherhouse liturgy coordinator

2007-09: Pastoral associate and music ministry in Clay Center

2009-present: Nazareth Motherhouse liturgy coordinator



**AT RIGHT:** During the Christmas Open House at the Nazareth Motherhouse in December, Sister Janis Wagner straightens the candles in an Advent wreath as Sister Mary Ester Otter looks on.

# Sister Janis Wagner

Living the consecrated life for 50 years as a Sister of St. Joseph has been good. I entered the CSJ community following my third year at Marymount College, Salina. The support of family, community members, friends and parishioners through the years helped me persevere in my vocation.

Throughout these years, I served others through the God-given gifts of music and love of the liturgy. I was able to enter into the joys and sorrows of others by playing the organ for their wed-

dings and funerals and for our community celebrations.

Establishing the Salina Diocesan Office of Worship with the approval of Bishop Cyril Vogel and the Diocesan Liturgy Committee reaped a fruitful harvest. I carried out the noble ministry of church music and liturgical education among the people of the diocese, and bonds of friendship still exist. My prayer is that people continue to open their minds and hearts to the beauty of liturgical worship, with its rich symbols, music and rituals.

"Te Deum."

# Sister Jodi Creten

It was around 1976. Vatican Council II was in full swing. Change was happening at such a rapid pace, and the exteriors of what it meant to be a sister were quickly disappearing.

I felt afloat in a sea of meaninglessness, not grasping what was happening around and to me in community and within the church. I knew a need for depth in my spiritual life and I seized the moment when a month of study for all Sisters of St. Joseph was offered.

I was not disappointed. A new Core Constitution connected all of us, and we began to understand what that really meant for mission.

That which was exterior and nonessential to religious life could pass away. I didn't need to cling to it as a safety net. It wasn't essential to who we were meant to be.

We began to study our history and foundation in 1650 France. We saw how seized with zeal for the mission our sisters were even then, and how they were

actively meeting the needs of the people.

I came to see that the imposed exterior trappings of cloister had held us bound from the original intent of our founders. That, I believe, set us once again within the marketplace. We could roll up our sleeves and minister wherever there was a need. We really were contemplatives in action, and I finally got it! That particular LIFE event set the charism deep in my heart for mission. And now, in the year

of my 50th Jubilee, I am forever grateful that I can still be "out and about" in the marketplace of the dear neighbor as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kansas!



**BORN:** Escanaba, Mich.  
**RECEIVED:** Aug. 15, 1961  
**CURRENT HOME:** Atlanta  
**EDUCATION:** BA, Marymount College  
**MINISTRIES:**  
 1963-1980: Taught in Salina, Silver City, N.M., Chicago and Boonville, Mo.  
 1980: Mother-house to assist with renovation projects and then served as Stafford Hall director 1984-87.  
 1988: Resident services coordinator at St. Thomas Manor, Eastpoint, Ga.; in 1989 began providing elder care.  
 2001-present: Caregiver with Home Instead Senior Care in Atlanta.



**AT LEFT:** Hospice patient Ruby Grace listens as Sister Jodi Creten speaks with her during a visit in mid-November.

**BORN:** Denver

**RECEIVED:** Aug. 15, 1961

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** BA, Marymount College; MA, University of Detroit; Mexican-American Cultural Center; Instituto Internacional de las Americas, Saltillo, Mexico



**MINISTRIES:**

1963-68: Taught primary grades in Chicago and Silver City, N.M.

1968-73: Religious education co-op program in Clyde, Clifton, Clara, Morrowville and Washington, Kan.

1973-75: Served on the initial development team and as a part-time admissions counselor at Marymount College.

1975-79: Youth ministry in Bayard, Central and Hurley, N.M.

1979-83: Pastoral ministry in Palomas, Chihuahua, Mexico.

1983-90: Worked with Central American refugees in the Sanctuary program at Manna House of Prayer, Concordia.

1990-91: Served with the Guatemalan Education Center, Salina.

1991-99: Began a new ministry in ecology/preserving the land, growing organic food, etc., on a farm in Tescott, Kan.

1991-2008: Served as a medical interpreter with Catholic Charities of Salina.

2008-present: Member of the congregational Leadership Council, Concordia.

# Sister Judy Stephens

The year 1983 was a memorable one for me and for us as Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia. That year hundreds of thousands of refugees fled Central America on foot. Some made it to the United States and they began to tell their stories. In March of that year an extended family came to Manna House of Prayer and was accepted into Sanctuary.

That decision to declare Sanctuary was a powerful one. Hundreds of churches as well as women's religious congregations across the United States made the same decision. It was a decision that claimed God's law above human law, that made the connection between the suffering of a people and those that perpetrate it. It called for justice, an end to torture and massacres and an end to funding those atrocious acts.

To be a witness to this happening in our country and in our congregation was a watershed moment for me. I felt faith alive across this nation. I saw people willing to take a risk. But best of all was meeting the families who came from Guatemala to live at Manna



House! This experience has shown me that the Gospel call to "welcome the stranger" is deep and universal, and that it is central to who we are as Sisters of St. Joseph.

I am grateful — for family, friends, the many I have known in ministry, and for a congregation that draws us ever deeper into rich faith and clear action!

**AT RIGHT:** Since her election to the Leadership Council, much of Sister Judy Stephens' ministry has focused on her duties at the CSJ Center in Concordia, as on this December afternoon.



**ABOVE:** Sister Marilyn Wall leads parishioners in the Stations of the Cross last year at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Greenleaf, Kan., one of the four communities in which she had served for seven years. Today she lives in Wilson, Kan., and ministers there and in two other small parishes.

## Sister Marilyn Wall

**M**any years ago I read a book written by Peter van Breemen, S.J. In it he said that the vowed religious life exists to attest to the fact that “God himself is capable of ravishing the human soul and bringing it to fulfillment.” That statement has come back to me often over the years and has always brought deeper meaning to me.

I have ministered in many places and many roles over the years. Yet, always, ministry has been the arena in which my prayer brought me to find God: in life situations, in relationships and in presence. Even in the most difficult times, there were experiences that affirmed God’s presence. I believe this is one fruit of contemplation in action.

About 20 years ago I began parish ministry. What I particu-

larly love is that I interact with the whole gamut of life experiences and meet holiness in its purest form.

My greatest joy has been seeking and finding the face of God among those with whom I minister. I have found the face of God most clearly among those undergoing difficult experiences — especially the ill and the dying. This has been a supreme blessing.

Most of all, I have learned that ministry is not work; it is God’s presence through me. It is being there as a companion for others, for whatever time is needed.

In looking back over 50 years, God has blessed me beyond my wildest imaginings and I am grateful — for my life, my family, my community and God.

**BORN:** Aurora, Ill.

**RECEIVED:** Aug. 15, 1961

**CURRENT HOME:** Wilson, Kan.

**EDUCATION:** BS, Marymount College; MS, Kansas State University; MSW, St. Louis University

**MINISTRIES:**

1965-66:

Teacher in Fairbury, Neb.

1967-69: High school teacher in Manhattan and Salina

1969-75: Biology instructor at Marymount College

1977-81: Social worker at St. Joseph’s Hospital, Concordia

1981-87: Spiritual director and associate retreats director, Manna House of Prayer

1987-91: Executive Council, regional coordinator

1991-94: Parish ministry in Salina and Office of Laity for the Salina Diocese

1994-2002: Pastoral administrator in Oberlin, Kan., and pastoral associate in Selden and Leoville, Kan.

2002-09: Parish life coordinator in Washington and Morrowville, Kan., and pastoral associate in Hanover and Greenleaf, Kan.

2009-present: Pastoral associate in Wilson, Dorrance and Holyrood, Kan.



**BORN:** Ogallala, Neb.

**RECEIVED:** Sept. 7, 1986

**CURRENT HOME:** Concordia

**EDUCATION:** AA, University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture; BA, St. Mary of the Plains College; MBA, University of Nebraska at Kearney

**MINISTRIES:**

1991-93: Youth minister in Salina, Kan.

1993-99: Youth minister in North Platte, Neb.

1999-2006: Pastoral minister in Gothenburg, Neb.

2006-present: Finance officer for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia



## Sister Pat Eichner

**I** could come up with a number of experiences that capture what religious life means to me, but the one that stands out is my seven years in the Gothenburg, Neb., parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

It was during this seven-year stretch that I felt most alive with our CSJ charism and mission. Not only did I work with the people in the parish, but I was also involved in the Gothenburg community.

I helped coach junior high school track and was a mentor for the Team Mates program for at-risk students. I made friends not only with the people of the parish, but also with many people of different faiths. For me it was a very inclusive relationship with the people of Gothenburg. As Father Medaille said, to love the neighbor without distinction. I felt that I was able to really do that during my time in Gothenburg.

I realize this even more today than when I was there.

I have been away for five years and I recently met a young couple who moved to Gothenburg after I left. When being in-



roduced the wife said, “Oh, I have heard so much about you. The people here really do miss you. They still continue to talk about the impact you had on the parish and town.”

Besides being humbled by these remarks, I also realize that I need to thank God for helping me have such a big impact on the parish and the Gothenburg community.

**AT RIGHT:** Before a long day handling the financial affairs of the Concordia-based congregation, Sister Pat Eichner gets up early on a late summer morning to work in the large garden that helps provide produce for the sisters with whom she lives.