



Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi

July 2008

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Dear Friend,

On June 23, five cousins gathered at a restaurant in Cudahy, near our Motherhouse in St. Francis, Wisconsin, to celebrate the birthday of Rose Marie Kruse, OSF. Certainly an 86-year birthday is a special occasion, but what made the event totally unique is that the five cousins are ALL Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

(Clockwise from top)
Sr. Bernardine Menke
Sr. Rita Menke
Sr. Rose Marie Kruse
Sr. Rosanne Sanders

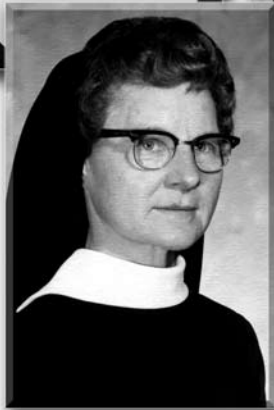
The four older Sisters, retired and ranging in age from 80 to 90, are the nieces of Sr. Generose Menke (dec. 1940). The fifth and younger cousin, Sr. Margaret Kruse, is a grand niece and currently a member of the Administrative Team of the congregation. Two of the group, Sisters Bernardine and Rita Menke, are siblings.

All were born and raised in Iowa, and all attended St. John's elementary school in Houghton. So, in addition to having an aunt in the congregation, each became familiar with our Franciscan order through their teachers.

Sisters Rosanne (baptized Alphonsine Sanders) and Bernardine (baptized Generose Menke) were the first of the five to enter religious life, arriving at the Motherhouse, in 1937. When they professed vows in 1940, they were given the names that they elected to keep after Vatican II offered the opportunity to resume their baptismal names.

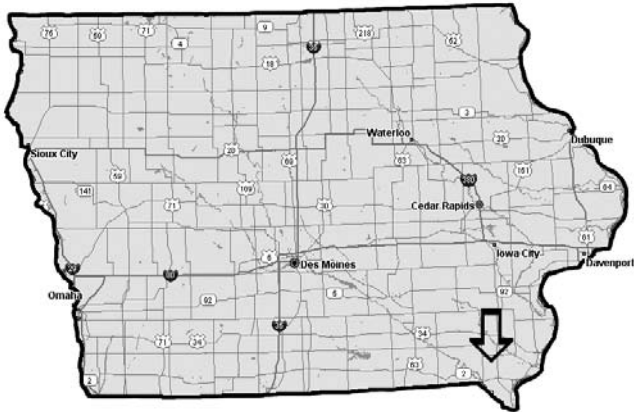
Although their paths diverged considerably in their ministries, working in some aspect of education and serving at St. Coletta of Wisconsin in Jefferson were common points for the two women over the next several decades.

Sr. Bernardine, a teacher in primary and intermediate grades for 30 years, served in Cudahy, Park Falls, Random Lake, Superior (orphanage), Paris and Spring Green, Wisconsin; Franklin Park, Illinois; Emery, South Dakota; Rockwell City, Iowa; Waynesville, North Carolina and Sterling, Colorado. She then made a career transition. She became a librarian, first





(Upper left)
Sr. Margaret,
1976, with four of
her 14 classmates



(Above) The arrow shows the approximate location of Houghton, Iowa, where all five cousins attended St. John's elementary school and were instructed by Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

(Below) The four older cousins are pictured here with Sr. Rosanne's brother, a Salvatorian – (l to r) Sr. Rita; Sr. Rosanne; Fr. Ray Sanders, SVD; Fr. Karl Hottkamp; Sr. Bernardine and Sr. Rose Marie.



at St. Coletta and Cardinal Cushing Schools of Massachusetts and then at St. Coletta of Wisconsin in Jefferson.

In the earlier years of her retirement, Sister Bernardine continued to work as a volunteer in the Motherhouse library. She now assists in the Stamp Department and as a seamstress.

Although Sister Rosanne began her ministry as a cook and doing domestic work both at the Motherhouse and the Archbishop's residence, her path took a turn when she was assigned to do catechetical and social work in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin. She recalls that she "learned on the job" and took classes at Cardinal Stritch College during the summers. Her duties were later expanded to include the nearby Kohler parish. At both places she directed the sodality and CYO, took the parish census, and visited parishioners in their homes.

Then, in 1951, she was put in charge of our aspirants – the high school girls who were testing a vocation while living with the community and attending St. Mary's Academy. The number of girls considering vowed religious life grew from 29 to 72 during her 11-year tenure.

After 1962, Sister Rosanne returned to ministries of a more domestic nature, including the Cardinal's residence in Chicago, St. Francis Major Seminary in Milwaukee and St. Coletta of Wisconsin. Then, in 1974, she returned to an academic setting when she became the director of a residence hall at Cardinal Stritch College.

Five years later, she accepted an opportunity to return to St. Coletta, where

she ministered for 10 years, first coordinating volunteer services, and then taking charge of the switchboard and serving as a driver.

Like her cousin Bernardine, Sister Rosanne remained active in early retirement as a driver for the congregation as well as providing switchboard services; she still does the latter on a volunteer basis.

Sister Rose Marie (baptized Louise Kruse) entered the congregation in 1945, and professed vows in 1947. Similar to her cousin Rosanne, her ministry began with cooking and housework at the Motherhouse, and also at St. Francis Major Seminary and the Cardinal's residence in Chicago.

Then, like Sister Rosanne, her duties took a new direction. In 1957, she became a group mother at St. Coletta's of Illinois in Palos Park, and then was reassigned in 1962 to provide residential care at St. Coletta of Wisconsin for two years. After a three-year return to domestic ministry at the Motherhouse, she went back to working with the handicapped in 1967 – this

time as a child care worker at St. Coletta in Massachusetts.

Her last full ministry years were spent as a teacher's aid in Fall River, Massachusetts, followed by a brief term as an occupational therapy assistant for the congregation. Remaining active in retirement, Sister Rose Marie is a volunteer at St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care, the Cathedral Food Program and the Motherhouse library.

The youngest of the four retired cousins, Sr. Rita Menke joined the congregation in 1949 and professed vows in 1951, taking the name of Sister Mary Alberta until after Vatican II.

Like her sister Bernardine, she became a teacher, beginning with primary education in Early, Iowa. But after one year, she became a full-time student, completing a bachelor's degree at Cardinal St. John's College, and moving into secondary education.

In Wisconsin, she taught at St. Mary's Academy and in Wisconsin Rapids. Her other sec-

The five sister cousins gathered at a local restaurant for an 86th birthday celebration.

(l to r) Sr. Rosanne Sander, Sr. Rita Menke, Sr. Margaret Kruse, Sr. Rose Marie Kruse, (the birthday celebrant) and Sr. Bernardine Menke.



ondary teaching positions were in Granger and Early, Iowa, and Sonoma, California. During this time she also earned a master's degree in education from the University of Notre Dame.

And then, like her cousins before her, her path took a turn. She worked in vocation ministry for the congregation and became the personnel director for the congregation for four years. She then returned to education for eight years as the principal of St. Mary's Academy, before taking yet another turn.

Sr. Rita became a student again, this time at Seattle University in the CORPUS program, which is pastoral ministry training for small or rural parishes. Upon completion, she entered pastoral ministry at Sacred Heart Parish in Enumclaw, Washington.

The detours in her ministry did not end here. In 1988, Sr. Rita became the administrator and coordinator for the transformation of Heiss Hall (part of the Milwaukee Archdiocese Seminary complex) into Clare Hall, a residence for active sisters. She remained in this service until 1995, when she returned to pastoral ministry for parishes in Gillette, Moorcroft and Wright, Wyoming.

She, too, remains active in retirement. Her volunteer services include the St. Mary's Academy Alumnae Association, the Coalition of Religious for the Great Lakes and the St. Francis Convent Choir.

The youngest of the family group, Sister Margaret Kruse, entered the congregation in 1966, professed vows in 1969, and holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Cardinal Stritch University. Before being elected to congregation leadership in 2007, she ministered as a teacher, a child care worker and as a pastoral associate. As a fully active sister, the course of her ministry is still being formed.

For Sisters Bernardine, Rosanne, Rose Marie and Rita, the paths are a map of dedication, perseverance, adaptability and, above all, service to others, no matter what the calling.

As Sister Rosanne recalled her various assignments, she said, "Each change was a special grace." In her 50-year Jubilee reflection, Sister Rose Marie wrote: "I praise and thank God He has been most generous guiding and calling me to various ministries I would never have ventured on my own. Each has proven to be a grace for me and others."

All are role models for flexibility, acceptance and a willingness to try something new in order to fulfill their vows to be of service to others. They are the epitome of a "can-do" attitude.

In return, through your generosity, we are able to offer a "can-do" response to them for their retirement years!

Yes, they continue to give of themselves in retirement as volunteers for the many tasks that need to be done. But they also pray for you, since they are now dependent on the congregational retirement fund of which you are an important part. Thank you for that!

Gratefully,



Sr. Marita Maschmann

P.S.: Please help us with a financial gift if you are able. Any amount you can give will help us to support the retired sisters of our congregation.

