



Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi



NOJOSHING NOTES

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NOJOSHING is an Indian word. It means "Straight Tongue."

In 1849, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi built their Motherhouse on land that was called Nojoshing by the Indians, because it protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue.

Milwaukee Suburb Was "Small Town" Home of 14 Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi

The "small town" holds a fascination for many people. And the people who come from small towns are loyal to their roots. After all, it was there that they formed early friendships and experienced the joys of growing up.

It is uncertain how many people would consider the suburb of a large city a "small town." But you are about to meet six Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi who consider Cudahy, Wis., a suburb of Milwaukee, a "small town." It is their hometown.



Cudahy, named after the meat packing plant, is within walking distance of the Motherhouse of the congregation. In 1915, our sisters began teaching at St. Frederick Parish and, through the years, 12 young women entered our community from that parish. Though the school closed in 1971, a group of sisters still lives in the vicinity. Two other Cudahy natives came to the congregation from St. Joseph Parish.

Our life style in community brings women together from many different places. It is understood that each one comes to the community a

Sisters Remember How Wonderful People Were

woman of her time, with her own talents and potential, formed by her past experiences and her relationship to God.

In the case of the sisters who come from Cudahy, their past experiences have several common threads. Knowing all the neighbors and playing with the other kids in the streets and parks was a common theme. A lot of life centered around the parish and the parochial school; and the parish priests and the sisters were, to a great degree, strong influences in their lives.

All of them went to high school at St. Mary's Academy, which was next to our Motherhouse; but after entering the community, these sisters branched out into many different paths in ministry, and each had to adapt to a variety of places.

Sister Mary Ann Polasek experienced close neighborhood ties growing up in Cudahy. She had an uncle who served as mayor and later her brother served as the City Attorney. At one time, the three Catholic parishes in Cudahy were dedicated to different ethnic groups. While the other sisters came from St. Frederick Parish, Sister Mary Ann attended St. Joseph Parish, which was a



Pictured above in a lab setting in 1974, Sr. Mary Ann eventually became a biology professor at Stritch.

Slovak/Czech parish. Her parents were Czech and she recalls that in third grade she began to learn the Czech language.

Scholarships to St. Mary's Academy and later to Cardinal Stritch College (University now) determined her choice of schools after grade school. In college Sister Mary Ann chose to major in biology and after her first semester entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

Wherever Sister Mary Ann has been in ministry, students, parents and co-workers have been important to her. She also values having lived with "really wonderful sisters throughout the years." Her assignments took her to small, medium and large cities. She has taught at the grade school, high school and university levels. At present she is the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Cardinal Stritch University. In her spare time, she is a very successful gardener.



Sr. Madonna Marie is pictured above at her 50th Jubilee of profession in 2005.

In contrast to the small suburban town of Cudahy, Sister Madonna Marie Mulqueen began her teaching ministry in a small rural parish school. She remembers

Ministries Give a Wider View of Religious Life

how wonderful the people were and how much they included the sisters in their lives. After other teaching assignments, she was sent to a suburb of Chicago where there was a closely knit Parish community. Sister still lives there, though her work has taken her to other suburbs.

One of Sister Madonna Marie's talents, as a teacher and in her volunteer work now, is the ability to assess students' learning problems, especially in reading and behavioral problems that interfere with the learning process. She also has a great capacity for noticing when people are in need and finds ways to collect clothing or food or whatever else is lacking for them. No one has kept a tally of how many children and adults Sister Madonna Marie has helped through the years, but the numbers would be very high.

For Sister Joanne Nicgorski (pictured here at her 50th Jubilee in 2006), her music ministry took her to some large cities, here and abroad. At one point she was the choral teacher at St. Mary's Academy, where once she had been a student. In Vienna, Austria, she was a student and in Beirut, Lebanon, a teacher in elementary and high school. In San Diego and Chicago she was active in liturgical music. At present Sister Joanne is helping to care for her mother, who



still lives in Cudahy.

What stands out for Sister Joanne in her ministry experiences is the opportunity to have gained a world view from many perspectives. On the one hand, her choral group celebrated the Millennium of Christianity in Poland in 1968 with a concert at St. Mary's Academy that featured songs sung in Polish. She collaborated with native speakers of Polish to help train the chorus in pronunciation and interpretation. On the other hand, she saw the Middle East conflict first hand and can recall that during the two years she was in Beirut, there were periods of days, sometimes weeks, when school was cancelled because of the fighting. Very few people have the chance to experience the tensions between factions at such close range.

Sister Joanne says that she has gained a wider view of religious life by living with sisters from other congregations. Her perspective of the similarities and differences in religious life and the impact that the second Vatican Council has had on women religious were seen on a day-to-day basis.

Hometown loyalty is very evident when you talk with Sr. Eileen Wendt. She is well versed on many aspects of the history of Cudahy and

Community Spirit Has Always Been Important

enthusiastic about all the events that are sponsored to bring people together for fun and celebration. Her grandfather had been the second mayor of Cudahy and her great uncle the fifth mayor. And for trivia, she will tell you that Vaughn Monroe went to Cudahy High School!

The community spirit of St. Frederick Parish was very important to Sister Eileen as she was growing up. There were very active youth organizations that brought the young people together.

When Sister Eileen's older sister, Evelyn (Sister Rita Clare †1980), entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Eileen missed her very much. God used this opportunity to help shape her call to religious life.

In those days it was most unusual for blood sisters to be together; but when Sister Eileen got her first teaching assignment, she was sent to the same parish as Sister Rita. It was a very happy situation for both of them. When asked about her ministry, Sister Eileen says, "It was a fantastic journey of many years. I enjoyed every place I ministered." As a teacher, and later principal, many students, parents and teachers were a part of her life. She said they all taught her so much about herself.



(Left) Sr. Eileen Wendt holds a baby with special needs at St. Coletta's of Illinois, in Palos Park, 1994.

Last year Sister Eileen moved back to Milwaukee and lives at Canticle Court, a senior housing complex on the grounds of our Motherhouse. She appreciates having the time to

get to know the other residents and re-connect with the sisters in the area.



Sr. JoAnn Schmitz (left), one of the current directors of the Office of Associate Relationship, posed with two past directors, Associate Susan Schramek (center) and Sr. Reneè Costanzo, at a recent celebration.

Sister JoAnn Schmitz is a very energetic and enthusiastic woman. She remembers as a child how creative play was with her friends. In the days before television, Sheridan Park, the shores of Lake Michigan and climbing the cliffs, (unbeknownst to her mother) were the places they played.

Ministries Include Joy, Prayer, Change & More

Her childhood was greatly influenced by the role the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi had in her life. She said that some sisters stayed a long time in the school and they got to know them well. The sisters were important to her and she remembers how they witnessed joy and simplicity.

For 47 years, Sister JoAnn has been a teacher in grades K – 6 in many different places. Today she is in a small town, Sterling, Colorado. She loves children and says that “being with their energy gives her energy. Their spontaneity and relationships are genuine and open.” She feels that she has been able to transplant to her classroom the happiness she experienced as a child in school.

In addition to her years as a teacher, Sister JoAnn spent four years working full time with the women and men who are in Associate Relationship with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. At present she helps part time on a team of three who maintain contact with our associates and help in the formation of persons who are interested in becoming associates.

Over the years, Sister’s Franciscan presence in Sterling has been instrumental in helping nine women become associates. These women meet regularly with Sister JoAnn for prayer and discussion.

Sister Rose Sevenich shares similar reflections about life in Cudahy as a child and the focus on school and parish

life for her family and the neighborhood. Some of her memories include having breakfast with the neighbor next door on Saturday mornings before her parents were up.

As a choir member, she and other girls would be invited to sing for the 6:20 a.m. Mass on Tuesday mornings in the sisters’ chapel. She says, “I saw my teachers in a whole different light; they looked sleepy, were quiet, were prayerful.” In other situations she saw them “enjoying what they were doing and having fun.” And most memorable, she recalls sliding down the hill in front of the school on flattened cardboard boxes along with one of the sisters.

Sister Rose’s ministry path began as a music teacher, organist and choir director. This was followed by training and work in pastoral counseling with our elderly sisters, and then as a pastoral minister and hospice chaplain in Alabama.

From 1999 to 2003 Sister Rose was part of the leadership of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, and now she ministers in Vocation Ministry. She enjoys “watching persons grow in confidence and in clarity of purpose.” Just as she observed the sisters early in her life and was invited to join them, now she is observed by another generation of women who are discerning their vocation and she is inviting them to “come be with us.”

The photo on the next page shows Sr. Rose receiving one of three leadership

Women of Faith Touching a World in Need

awards at the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) in Louisville, Ky., in October 2008.

As a full-time vocation minister, Sr. Rose was recognized for her vision and leadership in vocation promotion, not only within her congregation, but also within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. For two years she served as president of the Vocation Ministers of the Milwaukee Archdiocese (VMMA), and she presently serves as its secretary.

These sisters from Cudahy witness the positive influence that close-knit organizations and relationships have in shaping individuals for doing good later in their lives.

As Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, each one has touched the lives of so many persons in many different places. They exemplify the tagline connected to our logo: *Women of faith, touching a world in need.*

We also remember these sisters from Cudahy who have died:

HOLY FAMILY PARISH
† Sr. Alban Jablonowski

ST. FREDERICK PARISH
† Sr. Roberta LePine
† Sr. Ruth Lawler
† Sr. Nivard Donovan
† Sr. Jude Gaouette
† Sr. Ulric Gaouette
† Sr. Rita Clare Wendt
† Sr. Mary Herbert Robinson



EDITOR'S NOTE:

As of July 1, 2000, Holy Family, St. Frederick and St. Joseph parishes have merged to create a new faith community, Nativity of the Lord Parish in Cudahy, Wisconsin.

The website for this new parish states:

As members of Nativity of the Lord Parish, formed from the rich heritage of the Cudahy Catholic Community, we celebrate our oneness in faith uniting our lives in Word and Sacrament.

We rely upon this rich heritage to help us build our future. In accepting Christ's mission as our own, we accept the call to share our love and resources 'for the good of all.'

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make donations, order our cards and
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Nojoshing Notes is a publication of the
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.
It is mailed to supporters to share information
on the lives of the retired Sisters.

Please send your comments and suggestions to:
Nojoshing Notes Editor, Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
3221 S. Lake Dr., St. Francis, WI 53235-7193
e-mail: jparrott@lakeosfs.org

Retired Sisters Enjoy Renovated Dining Room



Retirement for our sisters is never static. One reason for this is that, as they age, their health needs often increase due to chronic conditions or the development of new health issues. For several years, the relocation of the dining room for the sisters who reside at the Motherhouse has been under consideration because of the distance to the eating area.



Left:
Sr. Lois Justen enjoys a quiet moment in the new setting.

Below:
The new dining area was opened with a reception for sisters and staff.

This past fall, the community room on the second floor, which is much closer to the residence area of the sisters, was remodeled to accommodate a food serving line and dining room tables. This means that all the sisters can eat together in one space, and the need for individual trays is eliminated, with very few exceptions for temporary special needs.

Outside of meal times, the room is still available for activities, meetings, and

programs for the sisters as it had been in the past. Versatility was one of the considerations in the planning stages.

We extend our gratitude to our wonderful benefactors who helped to make this project a reality. Your generosity in helping us provide for the needs of our retired sisters is greatly appreciated.



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Thank You!

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Rev. Donald Weber
Rev. Edward R. Wieland
Eliz Wiltzius
Julia Zywert

**The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
gratefully acknowledge these gifts
totaling over \$598,700.**

New Tradition Honors Donors

On February 2, we begin a new tradition in honor of our donors. We will have a special lighting ritual of the two large votive candles in our Adoration Chapel at the Motherhouse as a way of saying *Thank You* to all of our benefactors/donors.

These candles will stay lit day and night to serve as a visual reminder of the goodness of so many people who help us with our needs. We continue to pray for all of you and ask God to bless you and all of those close to you.

The photo of the Adoration Chapel (at left) shows the votive candles, one on each side of the altar.