



July 2015

Since 1849

3221 S. Lake Dr., St. Francis, WI 53235-3799

414-744-1160

www.lakeosfs.org

Dear Friend,

Most of us do some planning for our retirement. However, when the original plan doesn't really work out, often we are not ready or willing to put in the energy to change direction and do something different. Sister Margaret Jo did just that, though, after much prayer and thought. But first, let me tell you about her and all that led up to changing plans.

Margaret Josephine Brown was born on August 13, 1921, in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and baptized there. Her parents, Simon and Ethel, were from Indiana originally. When Margaret Jo was two years old, they decided to move to Loveland, Colorado, in search of a larger Catholic community. But after stopping in Longmont for a rest, they decided to stay there.

Coincidentally, the story is told that our sisters who set out from Milwaukee in 1907 to work in Loveland, Colorado, got off the train in Longmont by mistake and decided to stay. God works in interesting ways and sows seeds for the future.

LaVon, Margaret Jo's sister, was born in Longmont in 1925. Both girls attended St. John the Baptist School where our sisters taught. Margaret Jo recounts that visits by missionaries and the stories they told began to stir thoughts about her vocation as early as third and fourth grade. In addition to that, she found the sisters to be so joyful and caring that she spent a lot of time with them because it was comfortable being in their presence.

Sister Margaret Jo Brown's first profession photo, 1943, and her high school graduation photo, 1940.

After graduation from Longmont High School in 1940, Margaret Jo came to Milwaukee to begin her journey as a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi. At reception as a novice, she was given the name Sister Mary



(ABOVE) Sr. Margaret Jo with her parents, Ethal Ann and Simon Brown, and her sister, LaVon, with her husband, Al Zlsten.

(BELOW) Margaret Jo as a young violinist (to the far right in the photo) at St. John the Baptist School in Longmont.



Angeline, but went back to her baptismal name after Vatican Council II. She was professed on August 12, 1943. During her first years in the community, Sister Margaret Jo had studied to be a music teacher. Her assignments took her to Chicago Heights, Illinois; Emery, South Dakota; and Sterling, Colorado. She taught private lessons on the violin and

piano, played organ at Mass and devotions, and conducted choirs for children and adults.

When Sister Margaret Jo's father became ill in 1968, a temporary assignment to help him out turned into a permanent appointment in Longmont at St. John the Baptist Parish as a music teacher. In 1978, she transitioned into pastoral ministry and worked primarily with the older adults in the parish. One of her great joys was to bring Holy Communion to those confined to their homes.

During the eight years she had helped to care for her father, Sister became aware that the physical needs of older adults were being attended to, but very little was being done to help them stay active socially. The philosophy of caring for older adults was very different in the 70s and 80s. As Sister Margaret Jo said, "People were often placed in rest homes much too early. They still had a lot of energy and ambition, and needed outlets for engaging in life."

Through a series of encounters, and in addition to her pastoral work in the parish, Sister Margaret Jo was instrumental in establishing the Patient Advocacy Team (PAT) in Longmont. It was active from 1978 until 1993. PAT consisted of a core group of dedicated people from different churches that worked to organize activity programs and tours. This involvement not only expanded the lives of the seniors, but also for Sister Margaret Jo and the 100 generous volunteers who worked with her.

In 1996, Sister Margaret Jo retired and moved to Estes Park, Colorado, along with Sister Marie Gerard Peter, another native of Longmont. In connection with Our Lady of the Mountains Parish, she was a volunteer to the elderly. Then in 2000, Sister moved back to Milwaukee and lived at Clare Hall. Her volunteer work continued at St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care. But by 2002, the damp weather perpetuated by Lake Michigan prompted her to move back to Longmont.

I began this letter by talking about changing a decision. We see now that this is exactly what Sister Margaret Jo did. Upon her return, she established a regular exercise routine, resumed volunteer activities and pursued her hobby of painting with oils and water colors. She regained strength and mobility, and remained in Longmont until 2012. Then it was time to move back to Milwaukee and enjoy life with the larger community in spite of the damp weather conditions.

And enjoying life with the sisters is exactly what Sister Margaret Jo is doing. Her active ministry had always been at a distance, and now she is close to home. Sister maintains her connections with family and friends in Colorado, and makes rosaries for a guild in Longmont. Her outlook always has a bright side and that has endeared her to the people she has encountered throughout her life.

Her outlook is also very encompassing of others. In 2013, the year of her 70th Jubilee of Profession, she wrote this reflection: "I am



(TOP) Sister staying in shape.

(CENTER) Sr. Margaret Jo (right) making waffles at a PAT supper, 1985.

(BOTTOM) Displaying her water colors at the Longmont Art Festival.





**Sr. Margaret Jo's
60th Jubilee**

grateful that my religious life has given me many spiritual opportunities. Also the blessing of working with Spirit-filled Catholic lay people as well as many Spirit-filled people of other faith denominations.”

The theme of gratitude is upper most on the minds and hearts of our retired sisters. They have had their hard times, but they worked through them. Today our sisters continue to live very simply. Infirmary and frailty are now a part of their daily lives, but their trust in God gives them a hope-filled perspective on life. They are certain that their commitment to live for God was the right decision.

I ask you to consider making a donation to help us continue to care for our retired sisters and to meet their needs. Our limited resources depend on the generosity of persons like you to help us provide for them. In the many years they served others, retirement benefits were not a part of these sisters' small stipends. In return for the goodness you show to them, you can count on their daily prayers for you and your intentions.

May God bless you and fill your heart with joy and peace.

With abundant gratitude,

Marcia Lunz, OSF

Sister Marcia Lunz, OSF



(ABOVE) Sister with one of her framed paintings



(AT LEFT) At St. Martin in South Dakota.

(BELOW) Her retirement party in Estes Park, Colo., June of 2000.



As Franciscan women with a commitment to caring for all of creation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi use environmentally friendly or post-consumer paper and soy ink whenever possible.

