



**Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi**

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Since 1849

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Dear Friend



Conserving energy is deemed a noble action for the cause of the environment, but expending personal energy for the cause of mission is equally noble. When Sister Lourdette Van Driel was born, moving slowly was not part of her genetic makeup. She also said that trying to keep up with her older brothers on their walk home from school, with a ferocious dog nearby, served to develop good walking muscles.

Now retired in her late 80s, her quick step and quick mind are still in high gear. It is difficult to get a meeting scheduled, because her volunteer activities are numerous. She is focused on others and helping out any way she can.

Born in 1928 at home on a rural farm in Iliff, Colorado (near Sterling), and baptized Dorothy, Sister Lourdette was the third child and oldest girl of 13 children. The youngest child was born in a hospital in 1945, and with her mother away for several days, it was then that Sister Lourdette realized the extent of housework that goes into caring for a family.

School was easy for Dorothy. She skipped second grade. During high school, in addition to the classes for the college preparatory requirements and Spanish, she volunteered in the office during her free time.



(ABOVE) Sister Lourdette Van Driel in 1960.

(BELOW) Sister Lourdette (FRONT RIGHT) and three classmates (FRONT LEFT), Sisters Jeanette Marie Longuemare, (BACK - L TO R) Beata Herrmann and José Hobday (dec.) practice for reception at which time they received their habits and their religious names.

She also took over, from her mother, the writing of the social column (*Alfalfa Valley News*) in the community newspaper, the *Sterling Advocate*. This involved phoning people to get the news and preparing the text for printing. It foreshadowed many more times when Sister Lourdette would step in to fill a position very effectively.

Dorothy graduated as valedictorian of her high school class with a full scholarship to the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley.



(ABOVE) Sr. Lourdette's family - circa 1955:
 (BACK - L TO R) Edward, Donald, Paul, Sr. Genevieve,
 Sr. Lourdette, Ruth, Charles and Everett.
 (FRONT - L TO R) Robert, Helen, Marie (mother), Louis
 (father), Alice and Clara.

(BELOW) Dorothy at her cabin residence in Evanston,
 Wyoming her first year of teaching there in 1949-50.
 At an elevation of 6,700 feet, she recalls that is was
 not unusual to have snow from October to May.



Her dream was to be a teacher, but her counselor advised her to study home economics. It turned out, however, that after one year she switched to business education. To cover other expenses, Dorothy worked in the business office at the university doing transcripts, did baby sitting, and had room and board

opportunities with a family that had special needs children.

After her junior year, in order to gain some experience, Dorothy taught business education at the high school in Peetz, Colorado, and also coached the girls in basketball, tumbling, baseball and volleyball. In her senior year, she fulfilled a dream of taking piano lessons. Graduation was followed by three years of teaching in Evanston, Wyoming.

It would seem that Dorothy was establishing a solid career, but God's plans persisted. As a student in the upper grades of elementary school, the Extension magazine featured stories and advertisements from religious congregations which appealed to her.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi taught catechism classes in the parish on Saturdays and her dad, Louis, provided their transportation. Most memorable for her was the visit of Mother Bartholomew Frederick to the catechism classes. After high school, Dorothy thought that, "as the oldest girl she should stay

around in case anything happened to her mother.” In the meantime, her next younger sister, Genevieve, entered the community in 1949. Finally, in 1952, Dorothy came to Milwaukee and began her preparation to become a sister.

As a postulant, Dorothy taught at St. Mary’s Academy. At reception in August of 1953, she received the name of Sister Lourdette, and went back to teaching at the Academy as a senior novice as well as after her first profession in 1955. Her active ministry at St. Mary’s continued until 1964.

After 1964, she was engaged in a variety of ministries such as book-keeper, business teacher, director of alumni and community relations at Cardinal Stritch University, the administrator of the Marian Center for Non-Profits, and receptionist/ secretary at St. Francis de Sales Seminary.

Her love for learning was a thread throughout her life. A scholarship afforded Sister Lourdette the opportunity to earn a master of arts degree in business education at Catholic University in Washington D.C. She attended workshops and conferences regularly and held memberships in professional organizations to keep her skills updated.

One summer, when Sister was a teacher at Assumption High School in Wisconsin Rapids, she went to work at Consolidated Papers, Inc. in order to pick up some “on the job” know-how to pass on to her students. The job was located in the area where her students lived and offered an inside look at how a large industrial office operates. Her tasks were varied as she filled in for employees on vacation.



(ABOVE) Sister accepts the scholarship for graduate study at Catholic University of America, Spring 1959.

In 1973, an article in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* read, “Sister Will Be Brother.” This was referring to Sister Lourdette’s election as the first woman to the board of directors of the Big Brothers of Wisconsin. Her election necessitated the organization changing its constitutions to allow a woman to serve.

During Sister’s time at Cardinal Stritch University, she was responsible for the elderhostel programs in the summer. This meant developing three different topics for each of the one-week programs, and handling publicity, registration, and all the other organizational details related to hospitality. The most popular elderhostel, repeated for many



Gathering of St. Mary's
Academy staff:

(BACK - L TO R) Sisters
Mary Ellen Collins
(music) and Rita Menke
(principal), and Ms.
Elaine Peret (guidance
counselor)

(FRONT - L TO R) Sisters
Albert Marie Loeser
(bookstore manager),
Lourdette Van Driel
(assistant principal of
students, 1975-1983)
and Mother Romuald
Nolz (assistant in
library).

years, was on Polish history and culture in Milwaukee. Evaluations were very positive. For example, a person who had attended more than 10 elderhostels wrote: "This was as well planned and executed as any program I have attended and full credit should be given to Sister Lourdette for cheerful kindness and desire to help all."

Now in retirement, Sister still stays active with St. Mary's Academy Alumnae, helping with fund raising activities, filling in at the Motherhouse switchboard and other tasks. She will admit to slowing down just a bit physically, but her spirit is still very active. As a young woman, she answered God's call to serve and has rooted that service in prayer. She has touched so many lives and they have touched hers.

Whether this letter is introducing Sister Lourdette to you for the first time, or reacquainting you with her, may I invite you to touch her life in a special way by making a contribution for the care of our retired sisters. Sister Lourdette understands well the financial needs we have for retirement and so, as a

member of the community, will appreciate and be very grateful for any amount that you might be able to send us.

Sister has given generously all of her life, but was never compensated adequately, as was the case with all our retired sisters. The last thing we want is to have them bear the worry of how to pay for the care they need now. Your contribution to our need and your generous spirit will be blessed and rewarded by God. Thank you so much.

Gratefully in the name of our retired sisters,

Sister Marcia Lunz, OSF



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