



**Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi**

July 2016

Since 1849

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Dear Friend,

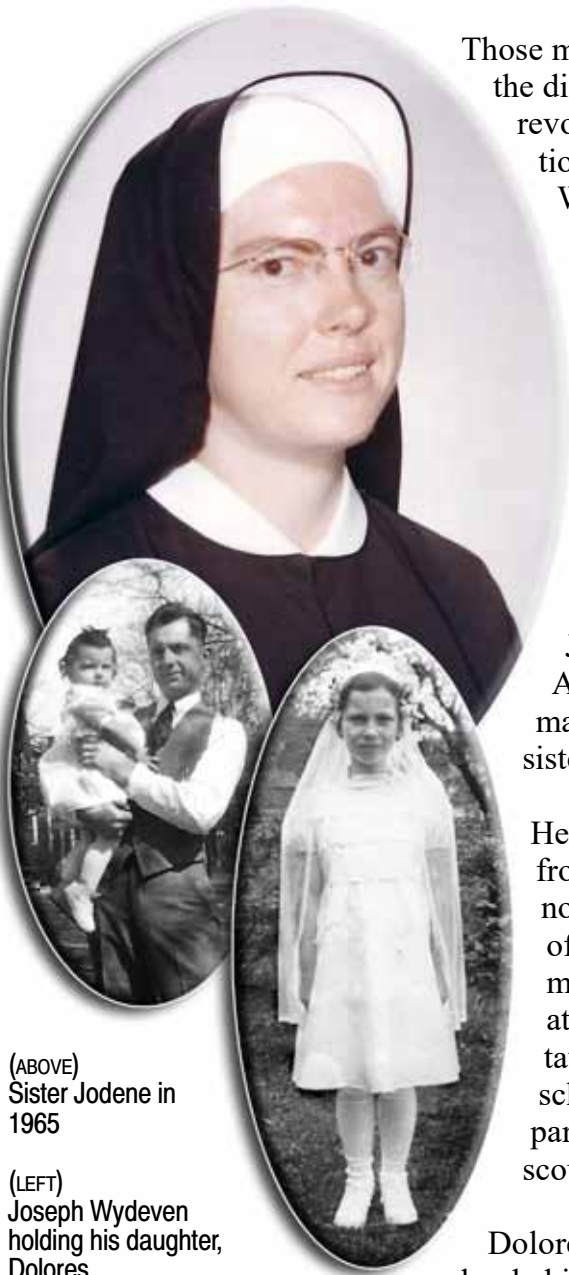
Those marvelous apps and computer programs that can tell the distance between two points and how to get there have revolutionized people's ease in getting to new destinations. For example, one can find out that from Little Chute, Wisconsin, to Baltimore, Maryland, is 904 miles.

As Sisters, we know God helps us get from place to place through our call, first in Baptism and then to religious life. For Sr. Jodene Wydeven, God routed her over the course of 66 years to get from Little Chute to Baltimore. But let's start at the beginning.

On October 1, 1935, Sister Jodene was born in Little Chute, five miles from Appleton, Wisconsin, in the Fox River Valley. Her father took her that same day to St. John Church and she was baptized Dolores by Monsignor John Sprangers. Her parents, Joseph Henry Wydeven and Anna Marie Kilsdonk had been born in Little Chute and married there. They had three children; Dolores was the big sister for two younger brothers, Donald and Joseph.

Her father worked long hours at a paper mill cutting paper from large paper rolls for construction paper, school theme notebooks and other paper products. Her mother took care of the children, the house, the garden and volunteered making Liturgical vestments for the missions. The children attended St. Joseph Parish School in Appleton and were taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Dolores liked school, especially math and English. Outside of school she participated in Girl Scouts and enjoyed being with the other scouts working for badges.

Dolores' mother taught her basic cooking and helped her get her baking badge for Scouts. As a 7th and 8th grader, Dolores became the baker in the house and gave up cleaning the refrigerator to one of her brothers in exchange. Baking was more fun!



(ABOVE)
Sister Jodene in
1965

(LEFT)
Joseph Wydeven
holding his daughter,
Dolores.

(RIGHT)
Her First Communion.



Dolores' journey to entering the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi may have started with the example of her mother, who was a Third Order Secular Franciscan member. The Franciscan Capuchins at St. Joseph Parish reinforced the Franciscan element in her life. Also, Sister Irene Bushman's family lived across the street. Sister was a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. Irene, eight years older than Dolores, had taken her as a first grader to school. On her home visit as a postulant, Sister Irene came over to visit the Wydeven family. Dolores remembers her plopping down on the floor next to her mother's chair and being impressed by the spontaneity and freedom of that act. Sisters were not always prim and proper!

Thoughts of being a Sister started to take root in Dolores. In 8th grade, she and another friend visited the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. At that time in her life, Sisters were Sisters. There were no distinctions. It ended up that Dolores, impressed with their simplicity and joy, entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, and her friend entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame.



(ABOVE) Sister Jodene with her parents and brothers Joseph and Donald. (AT LEFT) She and her brothers are with their mother at the Franciscan Care Center, Appleton, Wisconsin, 1996.

In September of 1949, Dolores became an aspirant and attended St. Mary's Academy in Milwaukee. Never having had sisters, she enjoyed the aspirancy because there were so many girls with whom to share life. The high school classes in journalism, chemistry, math and literature were highlights. Dolores worked on the *Fioretti*, the Academy newspaper. She said the hardest thing was that the aspirants were not supposed to talk with the other students, but she found herself not always in compliance with that rule.

High school was completed in three years because the aspirants went to school during the summers. Dolores became a postulant in September 1952. She was sent out to teach Grades 3 to 5 under the guidance of an experienced teacher. It was an era of apprenticeship, an alternative education that helped develop professional skills. On Saturdays, she took a college class from Sister Mary Kabeisman (†1998) on elementary music teaching.

In August of 1953, Dolores became a novice and received the name Sister Jodene. As a first year novice, she was at the Motherhouse, and during her second year, she again was teaching and taking college classes part time. An English major, it took Sister Jodene 17 years to graduate from Cardinal Stritch University because, even after profession of vows in

1955, teaching and part time college work continued. She would go on to earn a master's degree in Education Administration from the University of Dayton.

Sister Jodene taught all eight grades at one time or another. Sometimes this was combined with being a principal. Her most interesting experience as a principal was when the students completed a reading challenge and she had to do an Elvis impersonation for them as a reward. Through her research she learned a lot and delighted the students.

In 2001, Sister Jodene was asked to be the coordinator of the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore. They were exploring a merger with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, which happened in October of 2001. An exchange of sisters between Milwaukee and Baltimore was encouraged to help both congregations get to know each other. Fifteen years later, Sister Jodene is retiring from her position, but will continue to live in Baltimore, which has become home for her.

I asked her about the transition from the Midwest to Maryland. She said that from the first day that she arrived in Baltimore the Franciscan spirit was present, and for her, being Franciscan makes all the difference. Bratwurst was exchanged for crab cakes. Learning the geography of the city in order to help sisters get to doctor appointments, hospitals, the airport, meetings, etc., was a challenge that seems so long ago now. What was St. Elizabeth Convent, the Motherhouse of the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore, was renovated into a supportive living area for the congregation and, through Homes for America, 30 separate independent low income apartments in the former convent.



(ABOVE) Sr. Jodene (l) and Sr. Anna Marie Stadler with congregation peace banner, May 25, 1985, Wisconsin Capitol, Madison.

(BELOW) Sister with her 4th grade class at St. Clement School, Lancaster, Wis., presenting "The Prince and the Pauper" for the parents - 1986-87 school year.



During construction, the sisters had to relocate to another convent. This was an experience of adaptation, flexibility and patience. The building is now named Clare Court.

Perhaps most significant is that Sister Jodene has been a part of the dying and burial of 16 sisters since she came to Baltimore. In a small group, the loss of each sister had an impact on community life.



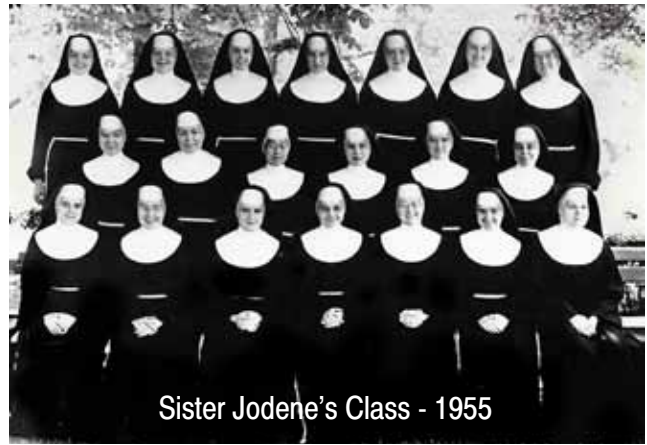
(L TO R) Sr. Jodene in Rome, overlooking the city, with Sisters Gabriel Marie Holter and Leonette Gertner.

When Sister Jodene and I talked about her vocation, she said she was so happy God called her to religious life. Community life has been important through all the years. Last summer, it was Sister's 60th jubilee of profession. At that time she wrote:

Blessing, blessing, blessing! What a gift God has given me every day of my life! When I think back over the years, I realize all is GIFT! Supportive parents, family, and friends; Catholic upbringing in a Franciscan Capuchin parish; the CALL to religious life; and all the persons who encouraged that call – holy women who were mentors and spiritual directors, loving communities with lifelong friends that fostered growth in prayer and contemplation. My heart is overwhelmed with gratitude to a faithful God, who loves me and encourages me, and to all who have touched my life with His and their love and encouragement.

Not only with Sister Jodene, but with all the sisters I interview, gratitude for the call to religious life is present. This sense of gratitude is present regardless of the difficult times they may have experienced, because they knew that God was guiding them on their journey.

Today you have an opportunity to do something to help the sisters' journey in retirement. Retirement funding was not a part of Sister Jodene's small stipend when she was teaching, nor was it for the rest of the sisters who are retired. Their needs are met, in great part, from donations of generous people like you. What you are able to share with us helps to supple-



ment our financial shortfall for retirement. I cannot tell you how important that is.

Gratitude is a gift of the heart, and the hearts of our retired sisters include all of our donors in their prayers on a regular basis because they are truly grateful. On behalf of our sisters, I thank you for including them in your prayers and gift.

With a grateful heart,

Marcia Lunz, OSF

Marcia Lunz, OSF

From a former student's 2015 Christmas letter

I hope you are doing well. I am grateful for all that you have done for me; you were quite a positive influence in my life. My father and mother were unable to give me the encouragement and guidance I needed. I remember your encouragement, your compliments and staying after school working on projects with you. Sister Jodene, those are some of the best memories I have of my childhood. I also remember an ice patch outside the school. All of us girls were sliding on the ice and we encouraged you to slide on it as well. We never took into account the fact that we were closer to the ice and less likely to fall. I remember that you fell, Sister, and we all felt really bad about that; after we got over the giggles . . . I am very lucky to have had such a positive influence in my life, and I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate all that you have done for me. May God bless you abundantly, more than you could ever ask or imagine.



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