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.

Pilgrims Called to Take Franciscan Spirit Home

In February of 2018, Sisters Diana De Bruin, Marcia Lunz and Sylvia Anne Sheldon invited Fr. Manfred Krumm and our German friends in Ettenbeuren and Augsburg to visit Saint Francis, Wisconsin, and to see our new convent. The dream on the part of all of us came to fruition August 21 to September 2, 2019, when we hosted 10 pilgrims. Several persons who wanted to come had to cancel for health reasons, family obligations or timing to get away. Most unexpected was that Fr. Krumm had to cancel two days before leaving due to health issues.

Our foundresses came from Ettenbeuren as lay women in 1849 and founded the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. Fr. Krumm grew up in Ettenbeuren, and after being ordained a priest, he served in Augsburg until his retirement this past summer. His connection to our founding is significant.

The visitors help us to connect with the people and culture of our foundresses. They in turn are able to see the results of the work of the women who left Bavaria to serve Milwaukee’s German immigrants at the invitation of Bishop John Martin Henni.

Each day of their pilgrimage took them to significant religious and cultural sites, from Milwaukee to La Crosse, Wisconsin, as well as south to Chicago, Illinois.

In formal and informal settings, the pilgrims had a chance to reflect on and share what was most meaningful on a particular day. In a culminating day of reflection to review the experience as a whole, they expressed over and over how much the building of relationships with the sisters meant to them. Some felt strongly that they were called to take the Franciscan spirit back home and share it with others.

The women who came initially from Bavaria in the 19th century brought the Franciscan spirit as Third Order Secular Franciscans. Now, 170 years later, the pilgrims are taking the Franciscan spirit back to Bavaria in the 21st century.
Fifteen 2019 Jubilarians: Representing 975 Years of Service as Vowed Women Religious

On Sunday, July 28, 15 Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi celebrated their anniversaries of religious profession at a Jubilee Mass at 3 p.m. in the chapel at Clare Hall, adjacent to the Motherhouse grounds in St. Francis, Wisconsin.

Milestones in our lives are achieved in daily, hourly living out our commitments, whether that be in religious life, marriage or at our places of work. This year our Jubilarians span the spectrum from 25 to 75 years of living out vowed commitment to God. Thousands of persons have been touched collectively through their ministries in a variety of ways. We celebrated with them with joy and gratitude for their witness to the Franciscan way of life rooted in God.

Sr. Diana De Bruin, director of the congregation, and the presider, Perry McDonald, OFM, Cap., and a cousin of Jubilarian Sister Evelyn Brokish, noted that the sisters were being honored for a total of 975 years of faithful service.

After the homily, Sr. Diana called the jubilarians by name to renew their vows, at which time all sisters present joined them in the renewal of their vows.

For Jubilee, the sisters also share a reflection on their years of ministry, and what it has meant to be a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi.

Some of those reflections are included here, along with the class photos.
Fifteen 2019 Jubilarians:
Representing 975 Years of Service as Vowed Women Religious

Sr. Evelyn Brokish
I thank God for every experience that I have had these past 60 years. And as a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi, I know that our mission has just begun. There is more to happen and I have more to give.

Sr. Rose Marie Dielen
I cherish the blessings I have received for the past 60 years as a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi. My heart is overflowing with gratitude and joy for all that God has done in my life and continues to do.

Sr. Helene Mertes
As a Franciscan sister, I have been able to touch many lives, especially those who are challenged.

Sr. JoAnn Schmitz
I give God thanks for God’s goodness in calling me to share community with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi these past sixty years. The blessings of community, family, and friends has all been pure gift!

Sr. Margaret Kruse
God has blessed me often... especially in my 30 years of parish ministry in Iowa [where] I discovered gifts I did not know I had and was challenged in areas that gave me confidence in myself and what I was to do. Each parish ... was a stepping stone to prepare me for the next call in my life. At age 70 I was looking at retirement, but was surprised by God, who called me to be the director of Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat in Wheatland, Iowa – another adventure and life learning!

Sr. Judy Placzkowski
I can’t remember not wanting to be a “Sister.” ... I felt God’s presence through nature and this drew me to look at Franciscan communities.... My ministries have been quite varied, but what continues to develop within me is the call to ... the Franciscan charism of “being with” others in living out the gospel call, no matter the ministry. Each day I strive to recommit to that call.

Sr. Sylvia Anne Sheldon
I’ve had the opportunity to meet and serve with some amazing, faith-filled people in a variety of settings. This has been an incredible gift, for which I am grateful to God.

Years of Service as Vowed Women Religious

60
(Back – L to R) Sisters
JoAnn Schmitz, Rose Marie Dielen
& Barbara Kenney
(Front – L to R) Sisters
Evelyn Brokish, Patricia McAlpin
& Helene Mertes

50
(L to R) Sisters Margaret Kruse &
Judith Placzkowski

25
Nothing Like Eating in the Great Outdoors

Have you noticed how food seems to taste better when eaten outdoors in the company of family and friends? There is nothing like a picnic to bring people together to enjoy food prepared on a grill and one another’s company. The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi are no exception to enjoying a meal together out in the fresh air. Sisters often reminisce of going to the Seminary Woods as novices with baskets of goodies in hand for a supper, or going to the beach of Lake Michigan to have a breakfast picnic. Eggs were fried on Buddy Burners made from No. 10 coffee cans and a candle. During the summer it would not have been unusual for the sisters to have Sunday picnic suppers on the front lawn of the Motherhouse.

Two events that carry on the tradition of eating outdoors were held this summer. On August 31, in conjunction with the German pilgrims’s visit, a chicken roast was held near the orchard. The pole barn was swept clean for the occasion. Trucks were replaced with tables and chairs decorated with hydrangeas. Outside a large spit was set up to roast the chickens to be served. The Todd and Claire Raasch family, relatives of Sr. Nancy Kazik, OSF, tended to Brother Fire and attentively watched the chickens roast for three hours. The evening was filled with good food, much conversation and song, as sisters, associates, and the German pilgrims enjoyed their time together.

To celebrate the autumn equinox, the sisters from Greccio and Nojoshing Communities hosted an outdoor Potato Bake on September 20 to celebrate the garden harvest. Baked potatoes were served with a variety of delicious toppings made by the sisters, associates, friends and neighbors who gathered. Delicious apple, rhubarb, pumpkin and zucchini desserts satisfied the sweet tooth of each present. A fire pit in the center of the circle kept Brother Fire present throughout the evening. In order that the sisters living at St. Francis Convent could also celebrate the autumn equinox, a special Potato Bake was held for them the day before on their second floor porch.

Yes, there is nothing like getting together with family and friends to enjoy the fruits of creation and the company of one another.

Bon appétit!