

We of Nojoshing

Nojoshing – Indian word for the area where our pioneer members settled in 1849; it means "piece of land stretching into the water."
The name was changed later to Saint Francis, Wisconsin.



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SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, Saint Francis, WI 53235-3799

We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Mary Kenan (Lucille) Rebholz March 25, 1931 – August 20, 2024

Sister Kenan, who was baptized Lucille, was born in Milwaukee, Wis., the only child of Louis and Estelle (Brownell) Rebholz. She graduated from Fernwood elementary school and from St. Mary's Academy prior to entering our congregation on September 8, 1948. Lucille became a novice in 1949 and received the name Sister Mary Kenan. As a second-year novice, she taught first grade at St. Gerard in Milwaukee.

In 1951 Sister Kenan professed vows and continued to teach at St. Gerard for two more years. Her next assignment was in Spring Green, Wis., at St. John the Evangelist where she taught first and second grade. A move in 1957 took Sister Kenan to Sheboygan, Wis., teaching first grade for a year before going to Franklin, Wis., at St. James to teach second grade until 1961. Then she moved to St. Stephen in New Coeln near the Milwaukee airport where she again taught first grade. She also completed her bachelor's degree in education from Cardinal Stritch University in 1961.

In the fall of that year, Sister Kenan went to Sunfish, Ky., and taught the four upper grades. She remained in Sunfish for seven years before returning to St. Stephen for four years as principal. In Brighton, Wis., at St. Francis Xavier, she was the principal and taught seventh and eighth grades for two years before making a transition to counseling, having completed a master's degree program in guidance and counseling from Marquette University in 1970.

In 1977, Sister Kenan moved to Jefferson, Wis., where she served as a counselor at St. Coletta School for eight years. In 1985, she headed east to Norwell, Mass., and worked as a skill development specialist at Norwell Community Residence for two years, and then became a special needs counselor at Memorial School in Hudson, N.H., for one year.

Beginning in 1988, she spent 22 years with LifeLinks, Inc., in Lowell, Mass., serving in roles that included residential coordinator for a group home, program coordinator, program staff supervisor, development specialist, and instructor. During much of that time, Sister Kenan also ministered at the San Damiano House of Prayer in Lowell. She and Sister Linda Greenwood, OSF, opened the House of Prayer in 2000. They offered spiritual direction, retreats for parish councils, and began a spiritual direction training program with the St. Clare Center at Cardinal Stritch University. The program was acquired by Merrimack College and continues to this day.

Sister Kenan, retired in 2019 and moved back to Saint Francis, Wis. She was living at St. Francis Convent at the time of her death.

In 1989, Sister Kenan started a faith-sharing group, the Rainbow Seekers, with five special needs persons preparing for Confirmation. The idea took hold and participation expanded, continuing until 2018. The group met once a month during the school year. Sister Kenan picked a biblical theme and a project for the year. Those attending found acceptance and companionship while growing in their faith and love of God.

Those who knew Sister Kenan well remember her wit. She was very mechanical and fixed a lot of things in her lifetime.

Sister Kenan might be described as a bookworm because there was always a pile of books next to her chair and her bed. This most likely stems from a love of words that was developed growing up.

In Sister Kenan's family home, there was a dictionary on the dining room table and, beginning when she was about 12, every day her mother would have her pick a word. For the rest of the day, that word was to be used as often as possible until bedtime.

At an early age, Sister Kenan's adventurous spirit was demonstrated when she and her cousin swam from the shore in Bayview to the breakwater in Lake Michigan. This was not met favorably by her parents.

As a Postulant, she loved sleeping in the dormitory with others around her. They were the "siblings" she never had. Characteristic of her was her simple lifestyle and willingness to help others. Her years in Sunfish were very happy years, working with the people and the students. It was there that she exercised her compassion for others in an unforeseen way. The mother of three small children was killed in a car crash. The three Sisters in Sunfish took it upon themselves to help with the children in any way they could. Sister Kenan was an important mentor in the early life of those children.

When Sister Linda Greenwood's young niece and nephew were living with her for a while, Sister Kenan spent time reading with Melinda, which included an introduction to the encyclopedia, and teaching chess to Joe, which resulted in playing the game regularly.

Sister Kenan lived out of a stance of gratitude and expressed it in her Jubilee reflections over the years:

50th Jubilee in 2001: It all has been pure gift – God's faithfulness to me.

60th Jubilee in 2011: It all has been a blessing. I am so grateful.

70th Jubilee in 2021: My enduring gratitude for my religious vocation and to my religious community. It has been a blessing.

As her health began to fail, she moved to Clare Circle in St. Francis Convent for additional nursing care. In mid-August her condition became more critical. Sisters began sitting with her on August 13, and she was anointed by Father Jim Lobacz on August 15. Sister Mariella Boehmer was present when God called Sister Kenan home into the fullness of eternal life on August 20, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.

With gratitude for Sister Kenan's life we pray: We thank you, God, we give thanks; we call upon your name, we declare your wonderful deeds.

~ Sisters †Marie Colette Roy and Marcia Lunz