

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.



Newsletter of The New Assisi Archives

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

We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Lenore Steilen July 5, 1923 – September 23, 2025

Sister Lenore, baptized Rosalinda, was born in Farmer, SD, to Joseph and Louisa Steilen, the fourth of 10 children. Our Sister Leona Steilen (†2019) was her sister. Sister Lenore attended St. Peter School and Edgerton Consolidated High School in Farmer. She joined The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi on September 3, 1941. When she became a novice on August 11, 1942, she received the name, Sister Mary Lenore.

Sister Lenore professed vows in 1944 and began her ministry of teaching that fall. She taught primary grades in Nekoosa, Wis., for nine years, simultaneously earning a bachelor's degree from Cardinal Stritch University. She spent an interim year teaching at St. Gerard in Milwaukee, before returning to Nekoosa as local superior as well as teacher.

She was then transferred to St. Joseph School in Wesley, Iowa, where she taught and was the local superior from 1956 to 1962. Her next mission was Holy Apostles School, New Berlin, Wis. While there, she began working on her master's degree at Cardinal Stritch University as a reading specialist. After two years in New Berlin, she headed to Sacred Heart School in Early, Iowa, for a lengthy tenure. She taught primary grades and served as principal of the school, remaining in Early until 1986. She then taught for a year in Davenport, Iowa, before moving to Granger, Iowa, to be in charge of the resource center and to coordinate religious education at Assumption Grade School.

During her summers, Sister Lenore spent time in Milwaukee, volunteering in the congregation archives and other departments, and attending the archdiocesan religious education conference. In 1994, the year of her golden Jubilee, she traveled to Assisi and Rome for the "Capture the Spirit" pilgrimage.

Throughout her life, Sister Lenore was loved by her students. Pupils whom she taught in grade schools in Iowa and Wisconsin kept in touch over the years and often visited. On the occasion of her 100th birthday in 2023, she received over 200 birthday cards from friends, former students, and relatives. In a remarkable gesture of appreciation, she insisted on acknowledging each individual who sent greetings, and designed a special thank-you card that she personally mailed to each one. In her typically kind and considerate way, she made sure everyone received her thanks.

Sister Lenore was known as a talented baker. While working at St. Ann Center for Inter-generational Care in Milwaukee after her retirement, her cookies and scones were loved by all. And each Christmas she was known for her pecan fingers cookies. She baked them each year for the congregation's annual Holiday Boutique up until 2024, when, at age 101, she agreed to share the recipe and let other Sisters and volunteers do the baking for her. Sister Lenore and her pecan fingers were featured in articles for the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* and the *Catholic Herald* of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

For her 80th Jubilee in 2024, she wrote: "I have always been and will forever be grateful to our God for calling me to religious life. Never once did I regret answering the call. My Catholic faith means everything to me, and my desire and privilege to instruct children in the faith fulfilled my fondest dreams."

Sister Lenore retired in 2000 and was an active resident of Elizabeth Hall in Franciscan Shore up until her death there on September 23, 2025.

~ Marie Colette Roy, OSF
~ Marian Doyle