

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 St. Francis, Wisconsin.



Newsletter of The New Assisi Archives of the
SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, St. Francis, WI 53235-3799

We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Leona Steilen

(formerly Sister Mary Joscito)

March 5, 1925 – November 24, 2019

Sister Leona was born in Farmer, S.D., to Joseph and Louisa (Kass) Steilen. She was the sixth of ten children. Sister Lenore is her older sister. Leona completed elementary school and was employed for several years before she entered our congregation on August 30, 1948. When Leona became a novice in 1949, she received the name Sister Mary Joscito. After Vatican Council II, she resumed her baptismal name.

Sister Leona professed vows with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in 1951. Her early assignments from 1950 to 1962 were at St. Francis de Sales minor and major seminaries as well as at two bishops' residences.

When sisters could request the kind of ministry they wanted to do, Sister Leona asked to work in a children's home and became a group mother at St. Joseph Children's Home in Torrington, Wyo., but returned to the Major Seminary as superior of the local community in 1967. She was delighted by the changes following Vatican II because sisters were permitted to attend the first Mass/reception of the newly ordained priests. Following her service there, Sister served for a year in Torrington and another year at St. Ann Health Center, Milwaukee, as a driver. In 1972 Sister Leona became a full-time student at Cardinal Stritch University, where she completed an associate degree in child care in 1974. She then served as a teacher's aide at the Children's Activity and Achievement Center next to the Stritch campus, 1974-1979.

In 1979, Sister Leona moved to St. Coletta School, Jefferson, Wis., where she ministered in a variety of capacities for a total of 18 years. Her time there was interspersed with a personal growth sabbatical and serving on the staff of a group home for adults with special needs in Milwaukee from 1986 to 1991. Sister Leona retired in March 1995 and

continued to live at St. Coletta in Jefferson as a volunteer. In June 2003, she moved to Clare Hall and volunteered in the congregation's fund development office and continued to do so for a few years after she moved to the Motherhouse in 2009. She celebrated the 60th Jubilee of her profession in 2011.

Caring for others was part of Sister Leona's life from the age of ten, when her youngest sister was born and she helped take care of her. As a young girl, the religious sisters in her hometown parish inspired her to think about coming to the convent; but she was torn between marriage and having children, and entering religious life. As Sister Leona grew older, she said she “had to make a choice between marriage and religious life.” The decision to enter in her 20s was delayed because she backed out. At age 23, after working as a waitress, seamstress and in defense plants in Milwaukee (Sister Leona was proud to be one of the “Rosie the Riveter” corps of WW II), she made the decision to enter the convent because “God kept tugging on my sleeve and I knew if I didn't come, I wouldn't be happy.”

In her last years, as Sister Leona's health failed, she became the recipient of care from others. Father Bernie Sippel anointed her on November 22. Although Sr. Lenore Steilen had been sitting with her since Friday, Sr. Ruth Mary Costello was with Sister Leona when God called her home on Sunday, November 24.

Jesus' promise is now realized for Sister Leona. *"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you also may be."* Jn 14:3

~ Marie Colette Roy, OSF, and Marcia Lunz, OSF