

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 Jean Margaret (Helen) Belland April 17, 1930 – April 6, 2020

Sister Jean Margaret was born in St. Paul, Minn., to Edmund and Elizabeth (Bibeau) Belland. Sr. Mary Ann Belland (†2013) was her older sister. Helen completed elementary grades at White Bear, Minn. She entered our congregation on December 7, 1948. When she became a novice in 1949, Helen received the name Sister Jean Margaret.

As a second-year novice, Sr. Jean Margaret was employed in housework and baking at St. Francis Major Seminary, Milwaukee. She professed vows in 1951 and was transferred to St. Coletta, Jefferson, Wis., where she ministered in child care for 18 years. The last two years she also served as superior for the sisters at Alverno Cottage, Jefferson.

In 1969, Sr. Jean Margaret became a student at Cardinal Stritch University and majored in education and psychology, graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1972. She continued her education in the health field and became a licensed practical nurse (LPN) and worked at our St. Ann Health Center and at St. Francis Children's Center until 1976. Moving back to education, Sister Jean Margaret entered Mercy Medical School of Nursing in Oshkosh, Wis., and graduated as a registered nurse (RN) in 1979.

After earning her RN degree, she worked at Fort Atkinson (Wis.) Memorial Hospital for a year and then at Meriter Hospital in Madison, Wis., while at Coletta James Home in Madison. She returned to Fort Atkinson Memorial Hospital for 13 years. After one year at Mulberry Glen in Whitewater, Wis., she transitioned to nursing patients in community-based residential facilities and the homebound until her retirement in 1998.

Retirement was filled with volunteering assistance to elderly persons. She worked part time in the bakery at the Fireside Theater in Fort Atkinson and helped sell the bread she baked. No one knows exactly how many wool braid rugs Sister Jean Margaret stitched by hand with a curved needle that created invisible stitches. She and her sister, Sister

Mary Ann, were accomplished quilters, a skill they had learned growing up and perfected in the course of their lifetimes.

Sister Jean Margaret connected with people through her kindness, care and concern. Her gentle smile was a welcoming gesture in any situation and her sensitivity to the needs of others motivated her actions. She wrote that she had preferred to work the night shift at the hospital because there was more opportunity to truly minister to the patients, especially when they had trouble sleeping.

Service to St. Joseph Parish in Fort Atkinson spanned sacristan work, preparing and serving funeral meals, providing hand sewn items for the parish fund raisers, and more. Always generous with her time and motivated by the needs of others, she and Sister Mary Ann worked hard to get a St. Vincent de Paul thrift store started in Fort Atkinson so that people with lower incomes would have a dignified place to shop at affordable prices.

It came time, though, to move to Clare Hall in 2010 when her sister needed more medical assistance. This meant leaving the involvements and people that meant so much to both of them. Sister Jean Margaret then volunteered at St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care in the café. As her health began to fail, she moved to St. Francis Convent in 2016 and into the new convent in May 2019.

After possibly suffering a stroke, sisters began sitting with her on Saturday, April 4. Sr. Jane Denning and Emily, Sister's personal care worker, were with Sister Jean Margaret when she died peacefully on Monday, April 6.

Whatever Sister Jean Margaret did, she did it with her whole heart in a thorough, committed and joyful way. Now she can say with St. Francis, “I have done what is mine to do; may you do what is yours to do.”

~ *†Marie Colette Roy, OSF, & Marcia Lunz, OSF*