

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.

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We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Leo Marie (Celesta) Schiltgen January 9, 1928 – April 22, 2020

Sister Leo Marie was born in St. Paul, Minn., to Leo and Alice (Brookman) Schiltgen. She was the fourth girl. Another girl, two boys, and a girl in that order completed the family. She was baptized Celesta Ann in honor of her dad's sister in our community, Sr. Celesta Schiltgen (†1978). Celesta completed grade school in Lake Elmo, Minn., and in 1948, graduated from a boarding high school program at the University of Minnesota, School of Agriculture in St. Paul. She entered our congregation on January 6, 1954. When Celesta became a novice on August 11 that year, she received the name Sister Leo Marie.

Her 29 years of ministry at St. Mary's Academy began with office work when she was a second-year novice and for two years after her profession of vows in 1956. Then she worked in the general office at the Motherhouse for two years, followed by two years in domestic work at the Milwaukee archbishop's residence, and a year at Cardinal Stritch University.

In 1963, Sr. Leo Marie returned to St. Mary's Academy and, during the next 26 years, she transitioned from office work to the position of treasurer, and later the business manager. Following a sabbatical in 1989-1990, Sr. Leo Marie returned to secretarial work for the English and history faculty at Cardinal Stritch University. She served in this capacity for 20 years, retiring in 2009. In 2015, when her health needs increased, she moved from Clare Hall to the Motherhouse, and in May 2019 moved to the new St. Francis Convent.

In her ministry of service, Sister Leo Marie drew upon her formal education, but also self-taught knowledge gained through experience and study. In high school, she had taken all the home economics courses she could, balancing that learning with participation in clarinet and voice lessons, band and chorus, and a music appreciation course.

Her first job after high school involved accounting and billing at a power company in St. Paul. She described these five and one-half years as “learning on the job which proved to be helpful later on in life.”

During summer school sessions at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, Sister Leo Marie earned a Certificate in Managerial Principles in 1976 and in Legal Aspects in 1980.

From flower arranging, which she learned by reading books, to the greeting cards she handcrafted, her artistic ability was evident. When her duties included liturgy environment, Sister Leo Marie kept the altars beautifully decorated and appropriate to the season. Her art of hospitality stands out among those with whom she worked and visitors she met. To be welcoming and of service were paramount in Sister's life.

Not so readily known is that Sister Leo Marie was an avid sports player in grade and high school, and her lifelong status as a loyal Vikings fan was a challenge to maintain in Packer land. Colleagues enjoyed conversations with her that centered on sports and respected her in-depth knowledge of football and baseball.

Throughout her years in community, she shared a special connection with her first cousin, Bishop Raymond Lucker. Extant letters show that he kept her informed about his activities, his thinking, and his appreciation of her comments in letters to him.

We can get a glimpse of Sister Leo Marie's writing from the reflection she wrote at the time of her Golden Jubilee of Profession in 2006. *“Being a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi has had many blessings for me. God's call for me to enter religious life came unexpectedly at age 26. I have not regretted that call. The 50 years of profession have been years of grace and challenges. I did things I never thought I could, or would do. I have had grace-filled and spiritual opportunities in the people I've met and the various works I was able to carry out. God's goodness was ever present.”*

God's call to eternal life also came unexpectedly for Sr. Leo Marie on April 22. A few days earlier she had experienced a possible stroke. The Administrative Team, Sisters Diana De Bruin, Ellen Carr and Kathryn Dean Strandell, had prayed a *Transitus Service of Anointing for a Dying Sister* with her. Sister Regine Ehm, Mary Pietrowiak and other nursing aides were present when Sister Leo Marie died peacefully.

“Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.” Ps 40:7-8 NIV

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