

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

## We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Jessine (Dolores) Reiss August 25, 1920 – September 11, 2020

Sister Jessine, who was baptized Dolores, was born in Milwaukee to Jesse and Helen (Mazurek) Reiss. She was an only child. Dolores graduated from St. Helen Grade School, St. Mary's Academy, and Marquette University before entering our congregation on June 20, 1943. When Dolores became a novice on August 11, 1944, she received the name Sister Mary Jessine, and after profession of vows on August 12, 1946, she began her ministry of teaching.

Sister Jessine taught high school in Sterling, Colo.; Waynesville, N.C.; and St. Mary's Academy, Milwaukee. She completed a master's degree in English at Marquette University in 1951. In subsequent years, there were opportunities for post-graduate work at Seton Hall University (South Orange, N.J.), Sophia University (Tokyo, Japan), Hamline University (St. Paul, Minn.), University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and DePaul University (Chicago, Ill).

In 1952, Sister Jessine began to teach at Cardinal Stritch University and would minister there for 60 years in a number of positions. These included associate professor of English, world literature and Latin; advisor to the college newspaper (*The CSC News*) and the literary magazine (*Eminence*); inaugurating and advising Sigma Tau Delta (honorary English society); recruiting students; and serving as director of publicity. In 2000, Sister Jessine transitioned to the College of Business and Management in quality assurance and curriculum assistant. She also assisted in the College of Nursing.

In 2009, Sister Jessine retired and participated in volunteer activities. In 2012, she moved to Clare Hall and then moved into the new St. Francis Convent in 2019.

In her background history, Sister Jessine wrote that, "My most enjoyable and challenging time was the period 1982–1992 during which Sister Lucille Walsh [†2013] and I co-chaired the Islamic-Christian Dialogue of the Milwaukee Archdiocese. The dialogue received papal recognition; and in 1999, both Sister Lucille and I received the Vatican II Award for our interfaith work."

Instilled with a love of the arts by her parents, Sister Jessine took advantage of evening classes at Stritch to study watercolor and dye painting with John Tryba, but found her home in Sister Clara Han's Chinese brush painting classes. Her first art exhibit was held in the Stritch Art Gallery. As a member of the Oriental Art Society, formed by Sister Clara's students, Sister Jessine exhibited in the 1998 juried exhibit at the Piano Gallery, as well as Alexian Village, St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care, St. Francis Convent and other sites. Her painting enhanced her interest in Chinese literature, philosophy and religion.

Reflecting at the time of her golden jubilee of religious profession in 1996, Sister Jessine compared her life to a tapestry, quoting the lyrics of *My Life Is but a Weaving*, "a weaving between my God and me" and, though, at times, I have labored haltingly, I always found Him working steadily.

And in 2006, on the occasion of her 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee, she wrote, "My life as a woman religious has been one of personal growth, filled with challenges and transforming responses to God's providential plans for me."

Sister Jessine's fragile health this past summer provided a challenge for reaching her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on August 25. She prevailed, and the staff and sisters celebrated with her on that day with cards, balloons and a beautiful cake. She talked about how appreciative she was of the many sisters and staff who spoke to her individually and shared conversation with her that day.

On September 10, a vigil was begun for Sister Jessine and she was anointed. Given the visiting restrictions, sisters and associates were invited to accompany her in prayer from their places of residence. At the age of 100, Sister Jessine was called to enter the fullness of everlasting life at 5:20 p.m. Friday, September 11. Her good friend, Sr. Joanne Nicgorski, was present when Sister Jessine took one last deep breath and died very peacefully.

Sister Jessine's openness to other cultures shaped her life and work. With the Psalmist we pray: Families of the nations give all honor to God, give glory and praise to God." Ps. 96: 7-8

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