

## *Sister Marlene Panko, SSND - 60 Year Jubilee!*



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My journey of 60 vowed years plus 1 year as a Postulant and 1 year as a Novice, has truly been an adventurous, diverse and rewarding path. Sixty two years ago prayer, ministry and community was more structured than now but it served as a good foundation in my life. I attended a public elementary school so weekly "Catechism" classes with the SSNDs opened awesome windows for me. My First Communion was at age ten. Learning about Jesus was the beginning of the journey that has continued to be my inspiration. As the early years of my life moved on, an understanding and love of God, the Father, Son and Spirit also broadened and the fascination was growing in the way I would relate to God and God would relate to me. I am so grateful, to those SSNDs of my home parish who taught me "Catechism" which was even then more than just questions and answers. At the local Catholic high school, staffed by the CNDs, I continued to be drawn more deeply into a life where the atmosphere would be focused and motivated. I was in awe with the God I was getting to know and love.

Ministry was another window that flowed from prayer. The Community prepared me well "To go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News" by giving me opportunities of retreats that fit my leanings such as a Desert Experience of 40 Days and Forty Nights, Centering/Contemplative Prayer and study in Liturgy and Spirituality.

I received a Bachelor's Degree from Mount Mary College, a Master's Degree from the Jesuit run Xavier University in Cincinnati, and a summer at another Jesuit University, Seattle University, and yet another year at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley. How grateful I am for the span of learning from such greats as John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and the style of prayer and action of Ignatius. All the predispositions God somehow put in my heart for prayer and this solid foundation resonated with me when I discovered John Henry Newman's quotation: "I sought to hear the voice of God and climbed the topmost steeple, but God declared: "Go down again-I dwell among the people." Literally, I replaced the "topmost steeple" with the "beautiful mountains" of Southern California that surrounded me for 18 years of my apostolic ministry.

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## *Sister Marlene Panko, SSND - 60 Year Jubilee! (Cont'd)*

My calls to diverse ministries include:

1. Elementary Teacher in the Midwest and High School Religion Teacher in the East at St. Mary's in Annapolis.
2. Summer Instructor in the Religious Studies Department at Mount Mary College.
3. DRE and Adult Education Teacher in Parishes in the Midwest.
4. Vocation Director, Postulant Director and founding Director of P.A.C.E. (Program of Apostolic Community Experiences) which provided opportunities for Sisters and lay women in the Chicago area to live and serve together in poor areas from Chicago to Mississippi and Kentucky).
5. Vicar for Men and Women Religious in the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin.
6. Provincial Leader of the former Chicago Province.
7. Certified Hospital Chaplain as well as serving in Independent, Assisted Living and Memory Care facilities in California.

My early years of being given opportunities to develop my spirituality was also the time of moving from early experiences of structured "Community Living" to experimental forms of community life, living singly while bonding with other SSNDs, living with Sisters of other communities and relating more and more with lay groups. Now my latest ministry is that of Prayer and Presence at Marian Village where I live in an Independent Living wing with ten other Sisters. Nine other SSNDs are in Assisted Living in an adjoining wing. We relate to each other and have meals in a dining room with many of the 200 lay residents who also live at Marian Village.

My special interest right now is visiting and supporting the SSNDs in Assisted Living here at Marian Village and nine Sisters living on the north side of Chicago at Resurrection Life Center, a Skilled Care facility.

So thank you God and thank you SSND for all you have given me especially through the many experiences of Prayer, Ministry and Community.