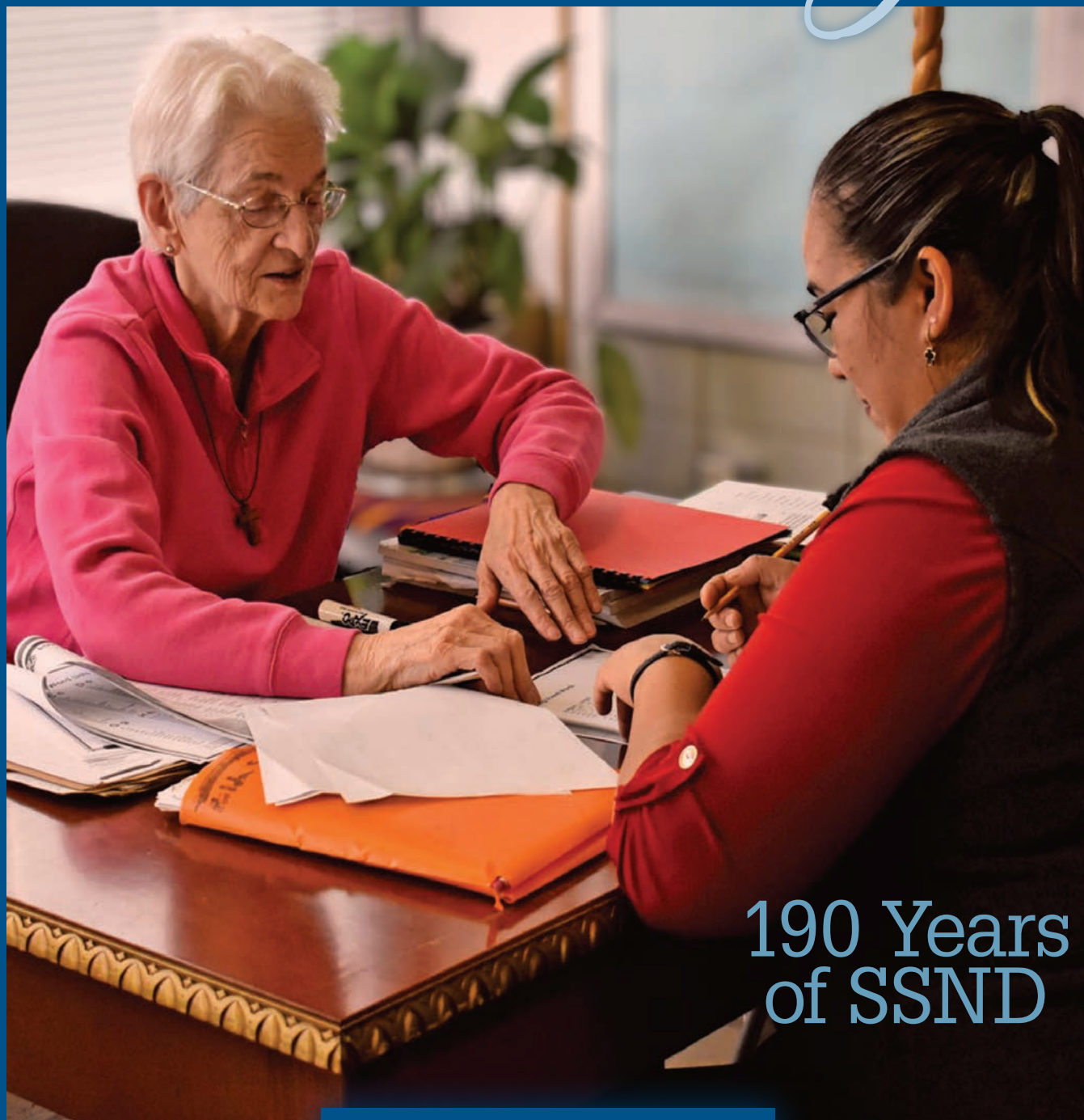


SUMMER 2023



School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest Province

Blessings



190 Years
of SSND

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

Our Jubilarians have contributed 25, 40, 50, 60, 70, 75 and even 80 years of service to our congregation!

ON THE COVER: Sister Lucy has been a Sister for 70 years, but still volunteers weekly at Corazón a Corazón in Chicago.

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This year marks the 190th anniversary of when Caroline Gerhardinger and two other young women began a common religious life in Neunburg vorm Wald, Bavaria, with the purpose of educating poor girls. There was nothing in those humble beginnings that suggested the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame would go on to become an international congregation still making an impact almost 200 years later.

Bishop Michael Wittman, who was helping Caroline start her community, died suddenly. Although living in community, Caroline had to wait patiently for the time to be right for her to take her vows and become Theresa of Jesus. Bishop Wittman's friend Father Sebastian Job, wrote the first Rule for her new congregation, but Theresa refused to back down on her conviction that she should lead her Sisters, believing a woman could better understand, direct and motivate these young women.

She, of course, was correct, and our congregation has only been led by women throughout its history. Sisters chose the women they wanted to lead them and accepted assignments from them to serve all around the world. They built and staffed schools of all levels, from kindergartens to colleges. They lived among the poor and built communities with them that continue to thrive. SSNDs found new ways of educating by providing support to women in recovery and to immigrants and refugees looking to learn English. Their prayers and loving presence are a powerful source of comfort and support for those who call to them.

Thank you for your support of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and especially our Atlantic-Midwest Province. We love hearing your memories of SSNDs who have touched your life and are grateful for the contributions you make to our province in their honor. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Blessings*, which touches on our 190 years of history, highlights some of our *Laudato Si'* work and, of course, celebrates our Sisters, particularly those celebrating a Jubilee this year.

Blessings on you and yours,

Charmaine Krohe, SSND

Provincial Leader, Atlantic-Midwest Province



School Sisters
of Notre Dame

Blessings is a publication for family, friends and benefactors of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

SSNDs in the Atlantic-Midwest Province express their mission of unity through education, which enables persons to reach the fullness of their potential. "Urged by the love of Christ, we choose to express our mission through ministry directed toward education. For us, education means enabling persons to reach the fullness of their potential as individuals created in God's image and assisting them to direct their gifts toward building the earth." (You Are Sent, Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, C22)

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The School Sisters of Notre Dame are part of an international congregation. They currently minister in 30 countries. "Our internationality challenges us to witness to unity in a divided world; to discover unsuspected ways of sharing what we have, especially with the poor and marginalized; and to search for new channels of service in the international church." *YAS, C26*



◀ For the first in-person Assembly in three years, a bit of silliness was allowed after a long day of

meetings. Sister Peg Malone, a member of the Provincial Council, and Sister Connie Harkin, an Assembly Delegate, donned mustaches after losing a round of trivia at the evening social.

▶ The North America Vocations Team visited the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Waterdown Community in Canada in November 2022 to talk about how Sisters in the province might support vocations.



Laudato Si' and Ecological Spirituality

As School Sisters of Notre Dame, Associates and colleagues, we have made a public commitment to respond to Pope Francis' call for us to be a *Laudato Si'* congregation. This seven-year commitment requires that we support and do our best to carry out the seven international goals proposed by Pope Francis and the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Let's take a special look at the goal ecological spirituality. What is ecological spirituality and what does this goal ask of us?

First, what is spirituality? There are many, many understandings and expressions of spirituality today. For Christians, spirituality is deeply tied to theology. You cannot have one without the other. One informs the other. In simple terms, theology deals with what we believe and spirituality focuses on how we live out what we believe.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis outlines many things we now believe in light of new understandings in scripture, science, culture, politics and especially in light of global ecological concerns in the world today. Similarly, throughout *Laudato Si'*, but especially in chapter six, Pope Francis suggests ways we need to live out these beliefs by embracing an ecological spirituality.

Ecological spirituality calls us to live in ways which acknowledge that every creature and every dimension of creation holds its own value in God's eyes (*LS* 69). Everything in the universe is inter-related, and this demands that we strive to live in mutual life-giving relationship with all aspects of creation. Our way of living what we believe must be rooted in a "conversion or change of heart" (*LS* 218). We believe that we are



responsible for many global expressions of poverty, injustice and ecological devastation. Hence, our spirituality must show concrete ways that we are working to solve the ravages of today's climate crises and ecological devastation. Our liturgical and SSND prayer lives need to witness to the splendor and magnificence of God's creation and help us carry out our

responsibilities to work for justice, peace and the integrity for every aspect of creation.

Laudato Si' is one of the greatest documents ever written. It needs to be read and re-read again and again. Pope Francis gives us a profound and clear vision of not only what we believe, but also a solid path for how we are to live out our beliefs in the world today.

The Origins of Our Congregation

The congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame came to life when God's call found an answer in the hearts of people strong in faith, farseeing in vision, and courageous in action. The congregation continues today [190 years later] in the mysterious interaction of divine call and human response.

Though its roots lie deep in the past, the congregation traces its actual beginning to October 24, 1833, when Caroline Gerhardinger and two other women began a common religious life in Neunburg vorm Wald, Bavaria. Their action was inspired by an apostolic spirituality destined to shape their own lives and profoundly affect those of many others.

Political and religious circumstances stemming from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution had created in 19th century Germany a desperate educational situation with far-reaching effects on church and society. The closing of the convent school of Stadtamhof/Regensburg, conducted by the Canonesses of Notre Dame, opened Caroline Gerhardinger, then a pupil, to a growing awareness of the critical nature of the situation. Following the advice of Father Michael Wittmann of Regensburg, Caroline and two companions agreed to be prepared to be teachers

in the school for girls in Stadtamhof, which had been continued as a parish school.

Under Wittmann's spiritual guidance, Caroline gradually recognized God's call to her. She shared Father Wittmann's concern for a new beginning of religious life and his resolve to found a religious community that would help remedy the social situation through education. In their vision, the renewal of society depended on the Christian family in which the mother, the first educator, had a key role. Thus, they chose the Christian education of girls as the vital service her community would offer. Their first concern was for poor girls in small towns and villages.

When Bishop Wittmann died suddenly during the crucial time of foundation, Caroline, in unshaken trust in God's providence, and supported by a friend of Wittmann, Father Francis Sebastian Job, dared to establish the congregation in 1833. The life of Mother Theresa's young congregation was decisively shaped by the *Spirit of the Constitution of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame*, written Father Job.

Mother Theresa's spirituality deeply influenced the spirituality of her congregation. Her love for God, nourished and strengthened by her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, enkindled the burning

desire of her life: to know Him and to do His will. She grounded her community in poverty in order to reach the poor and dedicated it to Mary, in whom she found a model for herself, her Sisters, and the young girls she served.

The structure of her congregation flowed from her perception of the needs of those she served as well as those of her Sisters. By sending Sisters in twos and threes to reach people in rural areas, she departed from the contemporary pattern of large, formal monasteries. To maintain a common spirit, direction, and goal among the Sisters, among the branch houses, and later among the provinces, she insisted on a unifying central government in her congregation. In contrast to established precedents and the prevailing spirit of the times, she was convinced that a woman could better understand and, therefore, direct and motivate her Sisters. When her views about the government of her congregation were misunderstood, her trust in God and her deep loyalty to the church sustained her in the suffering she endured.

An especially intense experience was her struggle to obtain approbation of her congregation and her joy when Pope Pius IX approved the constitution of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1865. The young congregation knew death and resurrection as integral to its life. Extreme poverty characterized its early decades; in those years the Sisters also experienced contempt and abuse from those who could not accept their values. In the

1860's, Sisters suffered from wars in Europe and America. Political pressures led to the expulsion of the Sisters of Westphalia and Silesia from their native lands in the 1870s.

At the same time, new life and growth came to the congregation. Appreciated and supported by hierarchy and laity, it spread from Bavaria to eleven countries in Europe and North America.

At the time of Mother Theresa death in 1879, more than 2,500 School Sisters of Notre Dame were living religious life according to her spirit. They met the needs of their time by educating girls, principally in elementary schools but also in orphanages, day nurseries, and industrial schools. They trained future teachers and pioneered the development of kindergartens. For girls who were factory workers, they established homes and provided night schools where these girls could receive basic education.



Mother Theresa

That emphasis on education continues to this day. Our province is still actively engaged in schools that educate young women and the poor, but our Sisters are also educating in unexpected areas, such as safe-haven homes for women in recovery, job training programs that offer a career in only 15 weeks, English as a Second Language classrooms, and programs that help refugees adapt to and succeed in their new country. Blessed Theresa lives on in the women she inspired and the impact they continue to have on our world.

Excerpted from *The Origins of Our Congregation*, prepared by Ministry Services

Jubilarians 2023

For more Jubilee, visit <https://atlanticmidwest.org/posts/celebrating-jubilee-2023>

80 YEARS

S. Jeanne McGue
S. Colette Ryan
S. Marie Taylor

75 YEARS

S. Mary Julianna Poole †
S. Mary Charia Ripple †

70 YEARS

S. Mary Laurentilla Back
S. Joan Helm
S. Mary Gracia Kloch
S. Valeria Belanger
S. Mary Oliver Hudon
S. Gertrude Marie Kramer

S. Lucy Giacchetti
S. Kathleen M. Kelly
S. Joan O'Connell
S. Madeline Mary Hanson
S. Rita Killoran †
S. Rita O'Rourke

60 YEARS

S. Virginia Bobrowski
S. Carol Gnau
S. Yvonne Nosal
S. Miriam Conroy
S. Ruth Marie Haley
S. Celeste Reinhart
S. Lupita Marie Cordero
S. Jeanne Hildenbrand
S. Catherine Sarther

S. Kathleen D. Cornell
S. Theresa M. Lamy
S. Sharon Marie Slear
S. Mary Hannah Fitzgerald
S. Katharine Lawless
S. Maureen Sweeney
S. Marie Vianney Gallagher
S. Joanne Maura Muñoz
S. Eileen Weisman
S. Anne Marie Gardiner
S. Marie Veronica Murray
S. Catherine Whalen

50 YEARS

S. Rebecca Tayag

† ETERNAL LIFE

Sister Mary Oliver Hudon, 70-Year Jubilee



Growing up, I lived only a block away from Saints Peter & Paul Church & School, where the School Sisters of Notre Dame were my teachers. Inspired by them, I attended high school at the SSND Juniorate in

Fort Lee, N.J. Several months after graduation I left for Baltimore to enter the Congregation, where I entered in 1950 and professed my final vows in 1959.

After my early years as an elementary school teacher, I was blessed to serve in a variety of ministries at the Diocesan, national and international levels. Some specific ministries

included serving as dean at Notre Dame College (now Notre Dame of Maryland University), as director of the Weekend College there, as the first director of the Bishops National Retirement Fund, and on our General Council in Rome with Sister Pat Flynn.

I have spent the past 22 years in Florida, as a parishioner of St. Ann Church in West Palm Beach. I served as parish coordinator of community services before launching St. Ann Place in 2003 with Sister Carleen Cekal, to minister to homeless women and men. We are both retired now, but still volunteer two days a week there. John Pescosolido, one of our Associates, now directs it. I live in Hope Community with Sisters Carleen and JoAnn Villademoros.

Sister Miriam Conroy, 60-Year Jubilee



Come as you are! In this more contemplative time in my life, the word Mystery, lived out in Graced moments, and Gratitude sum up my 60 years of the pure gift of SSND life.

Mystery — the unexplainable call to join the unknown, international community of SSND that came to this teenager from Dublin, Ireland. I first met these Sisters in Lingfield, England. Working there with the Junior grade children, and alongside Sister Arimathea, led to the unfolding mystery of 14 years spent in England.

My heart again knew the detachment (or letting go) that such a call demands, but with the help

of Grace, I continued to live out the mystery. I arrived in Canada to minister in various ways and places: Notre Dame Academy, Waterdown, Ontario — in charge of the resident students; St Agatha Children's Village for emotionally disturbed children; and Martin's Manor – Home for unwed mothers.

Then I experienced another mysterious call, this time to Peru and Bolivia in South America. A return to England challenged me with the call to parish ministry in Yorkshire and Liverpool for ten years.

On returning to Canada, my Gratitude flowed deeper into the mystery. "Come as you are" is still my mantra as I try daily to be present to the Presence called Mystery.

Jubilarian Reflections

Sister Lucy Giacchetti, 70-Year Jubilee



Looking back on her 70 years as a School Sister, Sister Lucy credits the congregation with giving her a solid foundation and support to make a difference. "During my time, most things I did you couldn't have done unless you were a Sister. It would have almost been impossible to go to Peru, for instance, without financial support, community support, church support."

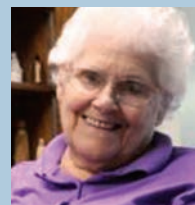
While today's young women have more flexibility and freedom to go where they want to go,

Sister Lucy says living as a Catholic Sister also means being a part of a valued community. "It's not easy, no. But nothing is. Not marriage, not raising kids, not religious life. Serving others is a worthwhile way to spend your life. And doing it with my Sisters has been very satisfying."

After 70 years of devoted ministry, Sister Lucy has certainly earned the right to put up her feet and rest. But she doesn't quite see it that way. As long as she still can, she will continue to serve others as she does now, through prayer, presence, and teaching English as a Second Language to the Latino community at Corazón a Corazón in Chicago.

In Memoriam

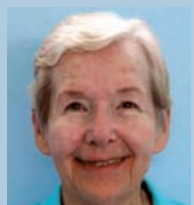
APRIL 2022 – MAY 2023



Margaret Mary Glick
4/20/2022



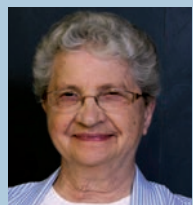
Zita Merkowsky
8/1/2022



Joan Marie Curtin
9/3/2022



Joellyn Grandchamp
11/5/2022



Alfreda Kimpel
12/1/2022



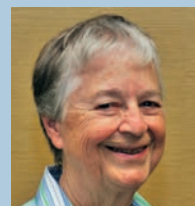
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Krusniewski**
3/26/2023



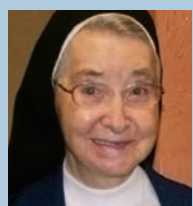
Mary Ann Schroeder
5/16/2023



Rita Killoran
5/23/2023



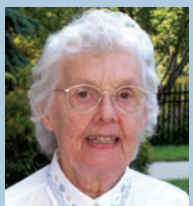
Janice Nadeau
5/6/2022



Chabanel Schumack
8/8/2022



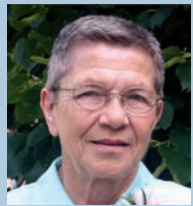
**Mary Theodore
Baccala**
9/14/2022



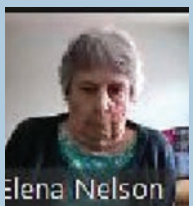
Jean Hartleib
11/11/2022



Eileen Pautler
12/5/2022



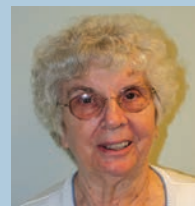
Audrey McCarville
4/1/2023



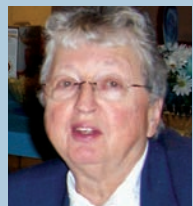
**Mary Helenann
Nelson**
5/19/2023



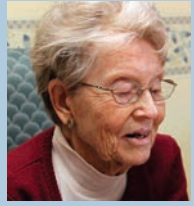
**Mary Jacqueline
Elly**
5/27/2023



Barbara Mary Slaney
6/22/2022



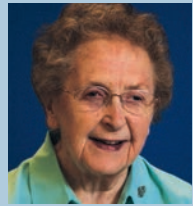
**Miriam Therese
Roncinske**
8/14/2022



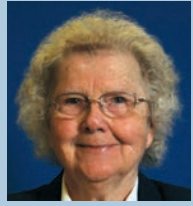
Mary Ann Wood
9/22/2022



**Eileen Marie
Morrissey**
11/15/2022



Bernadine Gutacker
12/27/2022



Mary Julianna Poole
5/4/2023



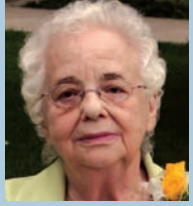
Rita Johnson
7/21/2022



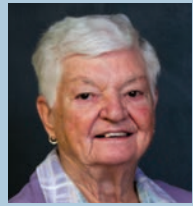
Sarah Thomas Neale
8/17/2022



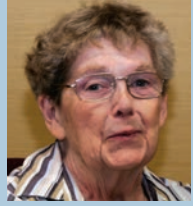
Agnes Plavcan
9/30/2022



Therese Messner
11/25/2022



Mary Charia Ripple
1/20/2023



Mary Smith
5/14/2023

Trusting in God's
power to bring
us to fullness of
life, we see death as an act
of worship. — *Blessed Theresa
Gerhardinger, Foundress, School
Sisters of Notre Dame*

MORE Remembrances can be read here: amssnd.org/memoriam

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Donald G. Burke, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Grammar School and Mission High School



I attended Mission Church Grammar School, also known as Our Lady of Perpetual Help Grammar School, in Roxbury, Massachusetts, from grade 1 in September 1958 to grade 8 in 1966. My three younger siblings also attended the school within the next ten years. For many years, I remember wearing a green tie with the letters OLPH descending down the tie.

I do not remember much about 1st and 2nd grades, but I do remember one of my teachers was a nice young Sister, Marie Peter (Sister

Donna McHugh). My third-grade teacher was the only lay teacher I had in eight years, Miss Alice Golden. I will admit I had a bit of a crush on her. I can still picture the Sisters I had in 4th and 5th grade — they were very good years, and I loved school.

My sixth-grade teacher was Sister Camilla Pianka. Throughout my years at Mission, Sister Camilla was also my piano teacher. She would have class with an upright piano in the front room in the convent. In my young innocence I was always struck by

how she smelled so fresh, the smell of fresh soap. On a more serious note, it was in Sister Camilla's class where we were asked by the principal over the PA system to pray for President Kennedy, who had just been shot in Dallas, Texas.

In 7th and 8th grade we moved into the Guild Building. (This is where the current OLPH School holds classes.) My seventh-grade teacher was Sister Noel Chabnal, and she was cool. She told delightful stories about teaching in other city schools. I was shy, but I did like a girl in class. Sister Noel was the only who knew! One day I found a card, supposedly from the girl I liked, on my desk, but Sister Noel was playing matchmaker and she was the one who left the card in the girl's name. I may have turned several shades of red, but looking back I cannot help but be flattered that Sister Noel thought so much of me to make that gesture. I needed that nudge!

Sister Helen, my eighth-grade teacher, had a special connection to my parents since she graduated from Mission Church High School with them as Joan Casey!

Though I did not attend Mission Church High School, I did return later and spent four years as a faculty member teaching English. After graduating from Boston College, I interviewed for an English teaching position and was hired by Sister Dorothy, who was in her last year at the school. In September 1975 I began my teaching career — one that would last for 45 years. I became a teacher, a good teacher, because of all the SSNDs who taught me and with whom I had worked.

I was guided by the new Administrative team of Sister Joan Doyle and Sister Miles Ferrick, and, of course, the heart and soul of the high

school who did all for the students, Sister Alice Catherine. And I would teach with veteran Sisters like Sisters Mary Martin, M. Evangelus O'Brien, Ethel Francis Shannon, M. Lotharie Hession, and Margaret Concepta.

Other SSNDs on the faculty were Sister Ann Eldridge, and my classroom neighbor Sister Eileen Reilly. Sister Jacqueline Colabella and Sister Mary Foley later came to the school as administrators. They would be joined on staff by Sister Ruth Haley, Sister Judith Caron, Sister Eileen Shea and the sweetest and most caring teacher, Sister Michaela Durkin. How lucky I was to grow as a teacher with these SSNDs. I was equally blessed when the students dedicated the 1979 yearbook to me.

I returned recently to the Mission Church for its 150th anniversary celebration. Being there that day obviously brought back many memories of the church and the schools. I was lucky and blessed to have been formed in faith and character by the many Sisters at Mission who touched my life.

Associate Director of Development, Laurie Molner, visited with Don Burke. If you would like to share your alumna/us story, please contact Laurie at lmolner@amssnd.org.



Sister Donna McHugh

Leave a Legacy

Along with English, Writing and Math, our School Sisters of Notre Dame instilled in you the value of thinking ahead and of thoughtful planning.

When preparing your estate plans, we ask that you consider remembering SSND by means of a legacy gift in your will or living trust. Your decision to include SSND as a beneficiary is a wonderful expression of gratitude and reflects your belief in our common call to support God's work.

Letting us know you've taken the generous step of remembering SSND in your will is always up to you. But we'd love to be able to keep you updated on our work.

In addition to leaving a legacy in your will, there are other ways to include SSND in your estate planning such as: make a gift through your retirement plan, give life insurance you no longer need, or donate appreciated stock to save on taxes.

If you would like more information on how to include SSND in your estate planning, please contact Jamie Shannon at 203-761-9732 ext 3207 or email jshannon@amssnd.org. Or visit our website at: www.atlanticmidwest.plannedgiving.org.



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