

2012 Jubilee



First Profession
July 30, 1952

JUBILEE WISDOM

Just as I have touched the lives of many people, so I, too, have been touched by many. It has truly been “a giving and a receiving of love and respect.”

-Mary Helen Bender, SSND

-formerly S. Mary Neal

Mary Helen Bender, SSND

50 Years

Sister Mary Helen served as a teacher for 13 years and as a principal in administration for 33 years at high schools in Missouri, Illinois and California. Most recently, she was the principal at St. Dominic High School from 1996-2007 and the president from 2007-11. In addition to her formal ministry, she has been involved in various SSND committees, local community groups and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). She received a bachelor's in English from the former Notre Dame College in St. Louis, a master's in English from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville and a master's in private school administration from the University of San Francisco in California.

A blessing of these years I want to share

is how much God has gifted me with wonderful people who have mentored and journeyed with me, sustaining me in my passion for Catholic secondary education – “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 22*)

I have also been sustained in my commitment to SSND by these many people – family, friends, colleagues, former students and families, SSNDs, and members of other religious communities. Just as I have touched the lives of many people, so I, too, have been touched by many. It has truly been “a giving and a receiving of love and respect.” (*You Are Sent 7*)

Two aspects of the gifts of wisdom I would like to share are:

Over the years of my life, I have come to understand more fully Mother Theresa’s words ... “All the works of God proceed slowly and in pain; but then their roots are the sturdier and their flowering the lovelier.” (*You Are Sent 5*) I have experienced this personally as I have grown in my relational, professional and spiritual life.

Only over time, through many experiences of life and through the support of family and friends have I come to realize – step by step – what being a woman religious and an SSND really means.

During my 46 years with high school students, what I have found most life-giving is the relationships developed over the years and the loving support and time spent with family and friends.



School Sisters
of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province