

2014 Jubilee



First Profession
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JUBILEE WISDOM

*What a beautiful tapestry
of relationships, mutual
support and learning these
50 years have woven!*

-Mary Helen Stokes, SSND

-formerly S. LeClerc



School Sisters
of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

Mary Helen Stokes, SSND

50 Years

Sister Mary Helen served as a teacher for 26 years in St. Louis, Missouri; Washington, Missouri; Belleville, Illinois; and Quincy, Illinois. She worked in health care, social work and visited the elderly for 14 years and as a coordinator for religious education for four years. Since 2009, she has served in pastoral care for Villa Marie Senior Care Center in Jefferson City, Missouri. She received her master's in American Studies from the former Notre Dame College in St. Louis and a master's in mathematics from Webster College in St. Louis.

A blessing of these years is the gift of all the wonderful people who have been part of my journey. As I look back to my first days at our School Sisters of Notre Dame Motherhouse, I see my family bringing me there to “present me in the temple,” so to speak. It was their loving, supportive, God-centered living that nurtured my vocation and continued to support it all through the years.

It was in 1962 that I entered the postulancy (the first stage of formation) along with 90 other young women. It didn't take long to appreciate the treasure of these new companions on the journey. There were our formation leaders and college professors. They were SSNDs from whom we first learned about the founding vision, charism and spirit of our congregation. Since our class joined during the time of the Second Vatican Council and took our first vows in 1964, also during the council, we were privileged to be part of the prayer, discernment and forums focused on what the council documents were calling us to as a congregation of women religious.

As I look back at the many SSNDs with whom I've shared community, I'm eternally grateful for our times of prayer together, our local assemblies where we shared openly the “state of our heart,” what each of us could do to enrich our community life, and the ways we found to support one another in our daily living.

I also recall with a grateful heart the dedicated people I've encountered at my places of ministry: school and religious education faculties, persons engaged in social justice and English language learning ministries, and personnel at senior care centers.

And I thank you, God, for the countless persons I thought I was called to “serve”; yet, hindsight reveals the many ways we mutually enriched each other's lives.

What a beautiful tapestry of relationships, mutual support and learning these 50 years have woven! I look forward to continuing the weaving with eyes more open to the blessing of the people whose lives intertwine with my own.