

2015 Jubilee



First Profession
July 28, 1965

JUBILEE WISDOM

*"Letting go, over and over,
has always brought me back
to what matters most."*

**- Joan Penzenstadler
SSND**

- formerly S. John Cecile



Joan Penzenstadler, SSND

50 Years

Sister Joan began her ministry as a high school teacher, serving 11 years in the Wisconsin cities of Milwaukee, Marinette and Chippewa Falls. She served three years in religious education at St. Leonard in Milwaukee, then joined the faculty at Mount Mary University. Between 1984 and 1988, she earned a doctorate degree in religious education, returning to Milwaukee to spend an additional 15 years as a professor at Mount Mary. Following a yearlong sabbatical ending in 2004, she ministered in Milwaukee in both higher education and co-director of associates at Notre Dame of Elm Grove. In 2009 she began her current ministry as vice president for mission at Mount Mary University. She holds a bachelor's in French from Mount Mary University in Milwaukee, a master's in theology from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, and a doctorate in religious education from Boston College.

A blessing of these years I want to share is ...

Reflecting on these years, my greatest blessing is vowing my commitment to God in a community of women who also desired to give their entire lives. What a gift! A specific blessing is having been a delegate at two of our worldwide General Chapters — one in Germany and one in Brazil.

The words of wisdom I would like to share ...

It takes a long time for one's heart to discern and embrace authentic Love, and with this embrace comes an understanding and appreciation of the disposition of surrender. Poverty and obedience are intertwined in surrender. Letting go, over and over, has always brought me back to what matters most.

An especially meaningful time in my ministry ...

There were many meaningful moments while I was teaching when I knew that the exchange I was having with students awakened something expansive, something meaningful, within them. For about the past 10 years, I have been privileged to be the SSND who directly promotes our charism throughout Mount Mary University. I have been holding discussions with faculty to discover what is at the heart of their teaching, and I mirror it back to them. This past week, two professors thanked me for giving them an opportunity to reflect on what is most important to them. Encounters like this fill me with joy and gratitude.

What drew you to the School Sisters of Notre Dame?

Even in grade school, it was in my mind that I would like to become a sister, and in high school I encountered School Sisters of Notre Dame for the first time. They were joyful, caring and excellent teachers. To my young eyes, an elegant grace permeated their life, and I quite naturally took the step to become a member of this inspiring community.