

2015 Jubilee



First Profession
July 31, 1965

JUBILEE WISDOM

*"Say 'I love you' out loud!
Plant more flowers!
Smile at strangers!"*

**- Marie Francine Koehler
SSND**

Marie Francine Koehler, SSND

50 Years

Sister Marie Francine began her ministry as a middle school teacher in San Diego. Returning to the Midwest in 1970, she continued teaching and working in elementary school administration in St. Louis and the Illinois cities of Belleville, Effingham and Herrin. Following a three-year stint as director of religious education in Los Angeles, she answered a call to serve as a missionary throughout the Tegucigalpa diocese of Honduras. From 1986-1996, Sister Marie Francine served in the Central American country as a high school teacher and campus minister. She also served her SSND congregation as formation director. Following a sabbatical in 1997, she returned to Missouri and served for more than a decade in Hispanic ministries at parishes in Webb City, Carthage, and Columbia. Since 2010, she has worked as a pastoral associate at Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Branson, Missouri. She holds a bachelor's in Spanish from the former Notre Dame College in St. Louis and a master's in religious education from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas.

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

I would say that COMMUNITY in its broadest sense has always been a blessing for me. By this I mean those people who supported me throughout the years, whether they be my SSND local, provincial, international community; my family and friends; and the many faithful folks who worked and prayed alongside me in my various ministry settings.

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

Lighten up! Say "I love you" out loud! Smile at strangers! Do not neglect hospitality! Plant more flowers! Seek God in the ordinary joys of life! Express gratitude! Every person is lovable, special, capable! Be mindful of the gift of the present moment! Reverence all of God's creation! Delight in the multidimensional diversity that surrounds me! May we allow Hope to pour her light into our souls and overflow into the darkest parts of our world!

An especially meaningful time in my ministry ...

As I look back over these fifty years I would say that my nine years in Honduras held some of my most unforgettable memories. Serving in another culture, I experienced the beauty of our SSND internationality and the satisfaction of ministering together with the poor. There in our school, I saw and felt our charism come alive! I learned how poor people can be some of the most generous people I have met. I learned how to laugh at myself when I made cultural and verbal "bloopers." I grew in simplicity and gratitude for all God's gifts.

What drew you to the School Sisters of Notre Dame?

School Sisters of Notre Dame were my teachers at my girls' high school in St. Louis, Rosati-Kain. They were excellent teachers, and I loved to learn from them, to be around them. They seemed to really enjoy what they were doing and it was contagious. I had not given my future much thought until my guidance counselor, an SSND, popped the question: "Have you ever considered becoming a sister?" That's all it took, and I have never regretted my response to God's invitation since!