

2015 Jubilee



First Profession
July 12, 1955

JUBILEE WISDOM

*"The longer I live,
the more deeply I realize that
God is with me always."*

- Mary Elise Zettel
SSND

Mary Elise Zettel, SSND

60 Years

Sister Mary Elise has spent her many years in ministry serving across numerous dioceses in Wisconsin. Her earliest years as a Catholic grade school teacher, principal and organist took her to Sheboygan, Greenville, Neillsville, and Darlington. From 1978-1983 she served the Diocese of Superior as an education consultant and superintendent. She was then elected to a four-year term as councilor in the former Milwaukee Province. Following a period of study and renewal, she ministered as a family therapist in Green Bay through 1999. She returned to Elm Grove to assist the congregation as administrator of SSND's retirement residence. By mid 2006, she began a transition into numerous volunteer roles around Milwaukee, including as a counselor for clients of the Dominican Center for Women. From 2011-2013, she served as a community leader at Greenfield's Our Lady of the Angels retirement center. Following a stay in Coolville, Ohio, she now serves in prayer and presence in Milwaukee. She received her bachelor's in biology from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee; a master's in education curriculum from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's in social work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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

My first year on mission was a special blessing. I lived with 16 sisters and 56 second graders. The moment I walked in the door I hit a very high learning curve. Everything from relationships to classroom management laid the basis for my future. I had many teachers who coached me and students who challenged me.

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

God is love. All is love. The longer I live, the more deeply I realize that God is with me always, takes care of me and finds me lovable no matter what.

An especially meaningful time in my ministry ...

In addition to working in the ministry of education, I served the sisters of the province for 12 years. I found this to be a very special and privileged time. I loved sharing life with the sisters, hearing their stories and accompanying them on their journey home to God. I learned so much from them, especially that it is very important for us to have each other in all phases of our lives.

What drew you to the School Sisters of Notre Dame?

I was highly influenced by the sisters during the 10 years they taught me in elementary and secondary education. I saw how faithful they were to the students and how they enjoyed living together in community. I realized how well this way of life suited me as a means of fulfilling my dreams.