



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

Transforming the world through education

2017 Jubilee

Celebrating 50 years

First Profession—7/18/1967

Formerly Sister Thomas Marie

Sister Joan Marie Van Beek, SSND

Sister Joan Marie finished her studies in Milwaukee and taught middle school students across the Milwaukee and La Crosse dioceses for several years following her first profession of vows in 1967. From 1976 through 1980, she served at Sacred Heart Central School in Calumet, Michigan. She served as administrator for eight years at Consolidated Parochial Elementary School in Mount Calvary, Wisconsin, before receiving the call to minister in West Africa from 1988 through 1997. Sister Joan Marie worked in pastoral ministry at the Catholic Conference Center in Nsawam, Ghana, as well as parish work and director of religious education in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. Following three years' service in high school administration in Kenya, she returned to congregational services at Notre Dame of Elm Grove through 2005. Traveling back to Ghana, she spent the next four years as a spiritual director in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. Since 2011, Sister Joan Marie has served in hospitality and spiritual presence at Sacred Heart Retreat House in Coolville, Ohio. She holds a bachelor's in English with a minor in Latin from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, and earned a master's in administration from the University of Wisconsin in 1978.



A reflection I have to share...

As I reflect on these 50 years, one word flashes forth: relationships. I am so very grateful to God and to SSND for the plenitude of relationships that have danced in my life: sisters with whom I have lived, especially the “senior sisters” at Mount Calvary and Elm Grove, Wisconsin; students, teachers, parents, janitors and secretaries at the various schools where I ministered; and, for sure, I am grateful for my African experience! Such wonderful relationships with the other SSND missionaries, the young African sisters, brothers and priests, the bishops who became good friends, and our cooks, cleaners, watchmen and drivers. I’ll never forget the market women! I loved my weekly visit to the female prison in Ghana, where I would lead the Communion service. Often, as I’d watch the women dance, I’d be thinking, “Now, that dance is not a ‘church’ dance.” Then I’d hear God say, “What’s it to you? Let them dance for me.” Here at Sacred Heart Retreat House in Coolville, Ohio, I enjoy so many wonderful relationships -- the people who came to the Retreat House, the people in our parish, and especially the associates and pre-associates who gather monthly to live the charism of our Mother Theresa. My life has been full-to-overflowing with relationships. My life is an outpouring of one sentence from our SSND Constitution: “We are called and sent to deepen communion with God and among people wherever we are in every place, in every time, in every situation.” (#9)

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