



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

Transforming the world through education

2017 Jubilee

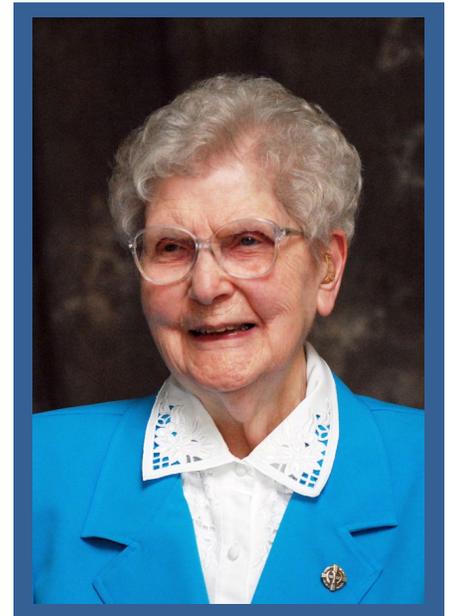
Celebrating 80 years
First Profession—8/3/1937

Sister Mary Louise Van Straten, SSND

Sister Mary Louise's ministry began with teaching elementary school, including 10 years at St. Michael in Milwaukee from 1937 through 1947. Later teaching roles in Wisconsin took her to Green Bay, Madison and Glen Haven, where she devoted nine years to students at St. Mary. She served as a teacher in the Diocese of La Crosse throughout the 1960s and returned to Green Bay area schools during the 1970s. In 1978, Sister Mary Louise began four years of full-time ministry as coordinator of religious education at All Saints parish in Gladstone, Michigan. She followed with seven years' service as a full-time secretary at Sacred Heart Grade School in Appleton. Since 1989, she has resided in prayer and presence at Notre Dame of Elm Grove. She holds a bachelor's in history with a minor in English from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, and in 1974 she earned a master's in mathematics from Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa.

A memory I have to share...

A blessing of these years I want to share is when I was stationed in Glen Haven, Wisconsin, God showed me his beauty through the many shades of green on the bluffs in spring, the many colors of orange, red and yellow in autumn, and the sun shining on the trees and glistening with ice in the winter, but most of all by the generosity and love of the people. My greatest challenge was working with 12 emotionally disturbed children in one classroom. On the other hand, one of my greatest joys was to know that students appreciated what I did. I discovered this when I began teaching fourth grade. As I walked into the fourth grade room, all the students clapped. I had taught them the year before in third grade. On another occasion, when I moved from fifth to third grade, one of my former fifth graders was on patrol. As I walked my students to the corner, he jokingly said, "Sister, you flunked." With my retirement in 1989, I continued to find ways to serve. As a member of the community's Global Peace and Justice Commission, I kept up with current issues, especially those affecting the environment and people who are poor and marginalized. Through reading, researching and attending educational programs, I shared what I learned on issues by emailing sisters and posting information on the convent bulletin board. Besides writing letters, concerns and needs are shared with God through ongoing individual and community prayer. In 2001, I helped to implement the For Whom the Bell Tolls ministry at Notre Dame of Elm Grove. This organization tracks people scheduled for execution in the U.S. Each day that there is an execution, sisters gather in prayer at 3 p.m. to remember the person being executed, the victim(s) and their families. Also, prayers are offered for an end to the death penalty as the Caroline Bell tolls. The best part of being a religious woman is being able to live with other women who share my values and help me to grow daily into Christ-like living. Even if I could do nothing, my very being is my doing. I give praise to God just by being who I am.



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