

Diamond Jubilarian Celebrating 60 Years (1950-2010)

Sister M. Benita Kordiak, OSF

Sister M. Benita Kordiak, daughter of the late George and Ann Kordiak, entered the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, OH from Immaculate Conception Parish in Columbia Heights, MN, on June 23, 1945. She attended St. Clare Academy in Sylvania and made her First Profession of Vows on August 18, 1950. Her professional background includes a B.A. degree from Mary Manse College in Toledo, OH and a M. Ed. from Marygrove College in Detroit, MI. For 35 years she taught elementary and junior high students in schools in Port Clinton, Toledo, and Huron OH; Detroit, MI; and Minneapolis, MN. For the past 25 years Sister has been a Pastoral Associate at Holy Cross Parish in Minneapolis, MN where she visits homebound parishioners and assists in a variety of church duties.



Sister recently shared her reasons for becoming a Sylvania Franciscan Sister and other aspects of her life as a Sister. Her parents had the greatest influence on her decision to become a Sister. They had great respect for sisters and priests and were a family that prayed together and were involved in parish activities. The Sylvania Franciscan Sisters who taught at Immaculate Conception School also influenced her decision to join the Order. She admired them and found them to be friendly, kind and easy to talk to.

As Sister Benita recalls the many students she taught over the years, she feels great joy and satisfaction when she hears that they have been influenced by her teaching and example and she delights when she learns that some of her students have become priests, sisters, dentists, nurses, police officers and firefighters. She personally feels that her greatest influence on others is the Franciscan Joy that others tell her she shares with them. Sister Benita prays that she will have the strength and health to continue the work she is now doing. Each morning she prays, 'Jesus, bless all those I will see today, talk to today or listen to today. Give them many blessings. If any of them want to do evil, turn them away. Amen.'

Sister M. Gwendolin Koniar, OSF

Sister M. Gwendolin Koniar, daughter of the late John and Anna Koniar, entered the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, OH from St. Hedwig Parish in Minneapolis, MN, on June 16, 1945. She attended St. Clare Academy in Sylvania and made her First Profession of Vows on August 18, 1950. Her professional background includes a B.A. degree from Mary Manse College in Toledo, OH, an M.A. degree in Remedial Reading Instruction and an M.A. in Elementary School Administration, both from St. Thomas University in St. Paul, MN. After 24 years of teaching in elementary schools in Toledo, Rossford and Port Clinton, OH and in St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN, she became an elementary school principal for 30 years in schools in Ohio and Minnesota. For the past six years, she has ministered as receptionist and minister to the elderly at River Village Catholic Eldercare, connected to St. Hedwig Parish in Minneapolis.



When asked recently why she became a Sylvania Franciscan, Sister Gwendolin responded that the good example of her grade school teachers, their friendliness and holiness as well as the prayerful example of her parents influenced her decision to become a Sylvania Franciscan. Sister Gwendolin feels she has influenced others as a Sylvania Franciscan by her life style and the practice of our Franciscan values. Her philosophy of JOY – J esus, O thers, Y ou – has guided her through the many years spent in education among elementary school children. Parents have commented how that philosophy has influenced their children, not only during the time they were in elementary school, but in their adult life.

She reflects on her 60 years in religious life and wishes only to continue to do whatever the Lord wants. Working with the elders at Catholic Eldercare now gives her an opportunity to continue to share her many gifts and talents with them that she so generously shared with thousands of young people. Sr. Gwendolin tries to imitate Christ and Francis and is a firm believer that "Unless the Lord build the house, in vain do the builders labor." (Psalm 127)

Sister Joan LaVerne Rutz, OSF

Sister Joan LaVerne Rutz, daughter of the late Michael and Martina Rutz, entered the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, OH from Holy Cross Parish in Minneapolis, MN on August 21, 1945. She made her First Profession of Vows on August 18, 1950. Her professional background includes a B.A. degree from Our Lady of Cincinnati College and a M.E. degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH. She taught at elementary schools in Cincinnati, OH, St. Paul, MN, and in Detroit, MI, and she also taught high school classes in Hamtramck, MI. Sister was also the organist at the parishes in which she served. Sister Joan spent 17 years at the Motherhouse in Sylvania doing a variety of ministries. She taught French, religion and speech at St. Clare Academy as well as French at Lourdes College. She also served as the Resident Director at Assisi Residence Hall, Director of Assisi Retreat Center and was part-time Administrative Secretary at Lourdes College. Sister Joan is currently Pastoral Minister at the Church of St. Helena in Minneapolis, MN where she has ministered for the past 20 years.



Taught by the Sylvania Franciscans in grade school, Sr. Joan wanted to become one and live a life like theirs. Her mother also influenced her decision to become a Sister and she has enjoyed her life and the variety of ministries in which she has served over the past 60 years. As she reflects on what her motivation has been all these years in religious life, Sister Joan notes that the quote from Jeremiah: 29:11 – "For I know well the plan I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare...plans to give you a future of hope," has sustained her throughout her life and ministries.

Sister M. Olivia Jazwiecki, OSF

Sister M. Olivia Jazwiecki, the daughter of the late Michael and Theresa Jazwiecki, entered the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, OH from St. Hedwig Parish in Toledo, OH on June 14, 1945. She attended St. Clare Academy in Sylvania and made her First Profession of Vows on August 18, 1950. Her professional background includes a B.A. and B.S.E. degree from Mary Manse College in Toledo, OH, and a M.A. degree as a Remedial Reading Specialist from Marygrove College in Detroit, MI. Sister Olivia's teaching career spanned almost 40 years in elementary schools in Toledo, Port Clinton, Crestline, Steubenville, and Fremont, OH, Detroit, Garden City and Algonac, MI as well as in Minneapolis, MN and Corsicana, TX. Sister currently resides at Rosary Care Center in Sylvania where her ministry is one of prayer.



Sister Olivia was influenced to become a Sylvania Franciscan by her teachers from St. Hedwig School where she attended from kindergarten to eighth grade. She liked all the Sisters and was especially attracted to those who had a sense of humor. The first retreat she made in the convent was a very special experience for her and she still feels the influence of that experience today. A favorite Scripture quotation from that retreat which remains with her today is, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to myself."

Sister M. Ramona Wolcenski, OSF

Sister M. Ramona Wolcenski, daughter of the late Joseph and Josephine Wolcenski, entered the Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, OH from St. Philip Parish, Minneapolis, MN, on August 7, 1945. She made her First Profession of Vows on August, 18, 1950. Her professional background includes B.A., B.S.E. and M.A. degrees from Mary Manse College in Toledo, OH. For almost 50 years Sister Ramona taught in elementary schools in Toledo, OH; Minneapolis, St. Paul, and New Brighton, MN and New Orleans, LA. For the past 10 years she has been a teacher aide/tutor at Holy Ghost School in New Orleans, LA.



Sister Ramona and her sister, Sister Ann Joachim, have been engaged in the teaching ministry in New Orleans for over 20 years where they have been incredible witnesses to the people of that city throughout the Hurricane Katrina tragedy. They continue to minister and witness to their beloved people, especially the children, in that city which has become near and dear to these two Sylvania Franciscans.

Sister M. Rebecca La Point

God is a God of surprises! How could a young girl from a large family in Trilby, Ohio (later incorporated into Toledo) ever dream of living such an exciting and adventurous life? In my 60 years as a vowed Religious Sister I have traveled extensively throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. In my travels and ministry, I have met many famous persons including Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The thousands of less famous persons I met in these years are equally unforgettable.



In my many years as a Sylvania Franciscan, I have served God's people as an elementary teacher and principal, Toledo Diocesan Vocation Director, Director of the Ministry Office for the Sisters of St. Francis, and for the past eleven years as an Assistant Professor in the Lourdes College Department of Education. My mottos have been, "Spend yourself for the Lord" and "Be open to new adventures". As my parents often reminded their large family, "God will not be outdone in generosity," and I am proof of God's goodness, graciousness and many happy surprises.

My year in Rome, Italy studying theology and Scripture with other Religious Sisters and professors from all over the world was a peak experience in my life. As an added highlight, we spent fifteen days in the Holy Land praying at all the places sacred to Jesus. Scripture came alive for me during that year of study and prayer. Another highpoint of my life was the Assisi Pilgrimage where I walked in the footsteps of Francis and Clare in Assisi, Italy. What unforgettable memories!

As a young girl in Saturday Religion classes, I often told Sister Rose Genevieve, an Adrian Dominican, that I wanted to be a missionary Sister and go to China. God knew that learning foreign languages wasn't one of my gifts, but I had other useful talents. When I was about age six, my dad met the Sylvania Franciscans. For him, it was love at first sight. His admiration influenced my decision to join the Sisters after graduation from high school at age sixteen. God surprised me then and continues to surprise me today. These past 60 years have been fulfilling, very happy and filled with surprises from a gracious God. Enthusiastically I encourage young women of today to trust God and explore the life a vowed Religious Sister!