



# Sister Profile

MARCH 2023

*Dear Friend,*

One of the goals in the Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi states that the Sisters strive “to bring the healing, teaching, reconciling, and liberating power of Jesus into the human situations in which they live and minister.” This line came to me as I listened to Sister Kathleen Hurley share her passion for the various ministries in which she served.

Sister Kathleen was born to Pearl and William Hurley on February 13, 1943. Along with her parents, her sister, Maureen, and her brother William, she lived in the family home in Bayview, a neighborhood in Milwaukee, Wis., not far from St. Francis Convent. The family belonged to St. Augustine of Hippo parish where she attended the parish grade school.

One of the childhood memories that she shared happened on her First Communion day. She remembers her aunts, uncles, and cousins gathering at her home to celebrate her First Communion. In the afternoon, Maureen, William, Kathleen, and their cousins were outside having a good time playing in the backyard.

She was wearing the First Communion dress that her mother had specially made for her. She doesn't remember how it happened, but she fell. When she got up, she noticed that her First Communion dress was no longer in one piece. That night her mother needed to reattach the skirt to the bodice of the dress so Kathleen could wear it to school the following day.



At right, Sister Kathleen as a student at Cardinal Stritch College.

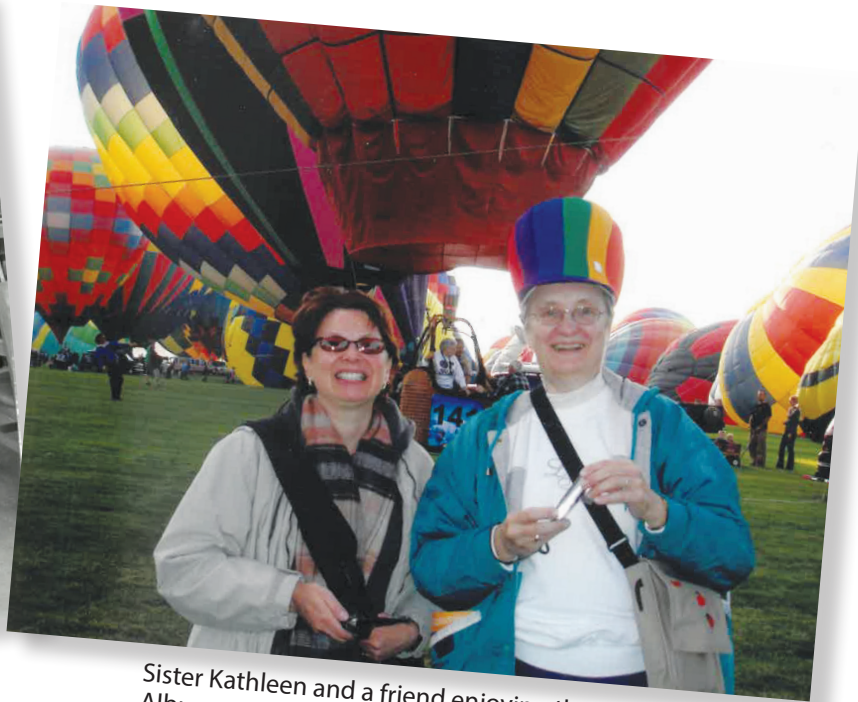


Upon graduating from elementary school, Kathleen and a girlfriend went to St. Mary's Academy where she was taught by the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. It is there where she met Sister Lucilda Sewald. Little did she know the influence Sister Lucilda would have on her. Her first impression of Sister Lucilda was, “Here is someone who





Two students along with Sister Kathleen at the St. Coletta School for Exceptional Children.



Sister Kathleen and a friend enjoying the Balloon Festival in Albuquerque, N.M.

looked and acted like the biggest thrill in her life was teaching high school girls.”

Kathleen became involved in helping to write the school newspaper and yearbook, which were moderated by Sister Lucilda. She also had Sister Lucilda for English, math, and science classes. She is forever grateful for the unbelievable education she received at St. Mary’s Academy.

Kathleen was so impressed with the friendliness of the Sisters, and the joy they exuded in their interactions with the high school girls, that Kathleen decided to join the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. On August 12, 1964, Sister Kathleen celebrated her profession day as a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi.

She attended Cardinal Stritch College (today, Cardinal Stritch University) and got a Bachelor of Arts degree in early childhood education. One of her teachers, Sister Joanne Marie Kliebhan, a special education instructor and a leader in the field of special education, had a great influence on how Sister Kathleen approached her teaching. Sister Joanne Marie believed that all children can learn if we learn how to teach them. Sister Kathleen took this to heart. This belief was reinforced when she went to George Peabody College in Nashville, Tenn. to get her master’s degree in early childhood education. Not only did it serve her well in her work with children, but also later on in her ministry with adults.

Upon graduation from Cardinal Stritch College, she begged to go to St. Coletta School for Exceptional Children (now St. Coletta of Wisconsin) in Jefferson, Wis. She desired to teach where she could make a difference. For 10 years, Sister Kathleen dedicated her life to teaching children with special needs not only at St. Coletta in Jefferson, but also at Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy School in Palos Park, Ill. (now St. Coletta’s of Illinois) and at St. Francis Children and Activity Center in Milwaukee, Wis. Her love for her students is evident in her smiling face when she recalls her years of teaching in special education.

Because of her experience in early childhood, she was invited to team-teach with another teacher at Cardinal Stritch College in the associate of arts program to prepare students to work in a day care setting. She recalls one of the students in her class who had very little self-esteem. Through her teaching and mentorship, she came to recognize her gifts and how to use them in early childhood education. After graduation, she went on to open two successful day care centers. In her years of college teaching, Sister Kathleen was impressed with the students’ enthusiasm to make a difference in the world.

After finishing a spirituality program at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., Sister Kathleen was involved in providing spiritual direction and retreats. It was during this time that she was the director of





Sister Lucilda and Sister Kathleen enjoying each other's company.



Sister Kathleen hard at work in her office at the church complex of St. Joseph on the Rio Grande Parish in Albuquerque.



Her sister, Maureen, and mother, Pearl, pose together for Sister Kathleen's Golden Jubilee.

the pre-novitiate program for the congregation. In this capacity, she journeyed with women who were discerning religious life as a Sister of St. Francis of Assisi. She appreciated being involved in the Intercommunity Pre-Novitiate program where men and women religious from various congregations collaborated in providing input on religious life and spirituality for those they were guiding.

Her experience as associate director in the Boston, Mass. archdiocesan Office for Spiritual Development, and her work as a pastoral associate in two parishes, laid a good foundation for what took place next in her life.

In 1994, she received a call from Archbishop Rembert Weakland asking if she would be interested in participating in a new program in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee where lay people would be trained to be a parish director to work in parishes who didn't have a resident priest. Never in her wildest dreams did she see herself in that role. After much prayer, she said yes to the invitation. After a year of preparation in what was involved in being a parish director, she was commissioned to

Holy Name Parish in Wilmot, Wis.

With the support of her supervisor, Bishop Richard Sklba, and the neighboring priests who came to celebrate the sacraments, Sister Kathleen facilitated the faith life of the parish and attended to the necessary administrative tasks. She invited input from those she served in order to assess what they saw was needed for the growth of the parish. Together, they built a vibrant faith community.

One of the parishioners expressed her delight in being more involved in the life of the parish. "My main reason for being enthused was, and still is, that this change not only makes possible more opportunities for lay involvement, but depends on it. I have felt needed and more a part of parish life since our parish made the change to a parish director. I feel rather like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle where every piece is needed to make it whole. I feel as if the Holy Spirit put out an invitation to come to be an active part of the whole."

After four years of being an associate director on the leadership team of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Sister

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Celebrating her Jubilee in 2014.



Sister Kathleen, right, and Sister Richelle Ranallo enjoying the sunshine at the grotto on the grounds of St. Francis Convent.

Kathleen went to minister as a pastoral associate at St. Joseph on the Rio Grande Parish in Albuquerque, N.M. She had felt a call to the Southwest for many years, and now it had become a reality. Ministering among the Hispanic, Pueblo, and Navajo people gave her a deep appreciation for the gifts of these unique cultures.

Whether it was assisting someone through the annulment process, bringing communion to the sick, or celebrating with the Pueblo people, she sought to respond to the needs of the people with loving, compassionate care.

In describing her calling as a Franciscan woman religious, Sister Kathleen says, “I have a passion for using my gifts in the service of the church. I want to help people to recognize God in their lives—to encourage them to believe that God loves them—to help people to know what they believe in their hearts.”

It was hard to leave Albuquerque when it came time for her to move back to St. Francis, Wis., because of health needs. Today, Sister Kathleen lives with her religious sisters in Elizabeth Hall at St. Francis Convent. She has taken an interest in learning all she can about the native peoples in Wisconsin. She enjoys having time to read and crochet scarves and hats for those in need.

Just like Sister Kathleen, our retired Sisters have responded in loving service to the needs of those they served. Today, they continue to share their gifts given to them by God in whatever way they are able. Each day they hold you, our benefactors, in their prayers. It is their way of saying thank you to you for your support in helping us provide for their health care needs. One way your gift can help us, is to provide medical equipment and personal health needs not covered by Medicare/Medicaid, such as motorized scooters and dental care. Whatever gift you can give us is welcomed and appreciated!

Thank you so much. May God bless you abundantly for your generosity.

Gratefully,

Sister Mary Kemen, OSF



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