

We of Nojoshing

Nojoshing – Indian word for the area where our pioneer members settled in 1849; it means “piece of land stretching into the water.”
The name was changed later to Saint Francis, Wisconsin.



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SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, Saint Francis, WI 53235-3799

We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Humbeline (Mary Ann) Guenther May 16, 1925 – April 25, 2024

Sister Humbeline, who was baptized Mary Ann, was born in Milwaukee, Wis., to Paul and Ottilia (Chesak) Guenther. She was the youngest of eight children, all of whom are deceased. One sister became a School Sister of St. Francis, and Sister Agnese Guenther (†1998) was a first cousin. Mary Ann’s parents died when she was two and three years old, and her Grandmother Guenther raised her. She was a fervent Third Order Franciscan who encouraged Mary Ann’s vocation because she “liked the lake across the street!” After graduating from St. Boniface elementary school, Mary Ann attended St. Mary’s Academy and was attracted to the congregation by her teachers, who were “patient, helpful, compassionate.”

She entered our congregation on August 28, 1942. When she became a novice on August 11, 1943, she received the name Sister Humbeline. She professed vows in 1945 and began her teaching ministry that year at St. John’s School for the Deaf in Milwaukee, where she served until October 1951, when she became ill. She recuperated at a sanatorium in Springfield, Ill., and at our former St. Ann Health Center. In November 1952 she resumed teaching, this time for hearing children at St. Gertrude School in Franklin Park, Ill. The following year, she was assigned to St. John the Baptist School in Longmont, Colo., where she taught first and second grades.

In reflecting on those years, she said, “After teaching deaf children for six years, I was missioned to Longmont, Colo., where I taught first graders who could hear. Those were the best years of my life! Before that, I thought I couldn’t teach because I had problems with discipline. But I learned how to teach in Longmont because I had 19 pupils the first year, and when I left after five years, I had 45 first and second graders. I then returned to St. John’s School for the Deaf to teach with confidence for another 24 years.” While teaching, Sister Humbeline completed her bachelor’s degree in English at Cardinal Stritch University in 1958.

When Sister Humbeline returned to St. John’s School for the Deaf in 1958, she taught the younger children and was a dormitory supervisor for the high school students. She served at St. John’s until it closed in 1983. After that, she served the congregation as co-director and director of retirement for nine years and then as coordinator for our Sisters who lived at a nursing home in Milwaukee for eight years, giving gentle, pastoral service to Sisters who required skilled nursing care.

As the director of retirement for the congregation, Sister Humbeline was an active member of the Milwaukee Intercommunity Retirement Committee. The goal of the committee was “to unite the efforts of the six congregations and provide leadership for enrichment programs for the aging religious.” Sister Humbeline was excited to be a part of this larger endeavor and participated actively, serving as secretary for the group at one point.

In 2005, Sister Humbeline retired and in 2008 moved to Clare Hall, where she lived until 2019 when she moved to the new convent. At the request of some of her friends, she wrote a list of the ways she volunteered. There were 31 items on the list!

One of the volunteer highlights for her was doing reception work in the office at Juniper Court. This consisted of not only answering phone calls and doorbells, but also helping the residents in counting out quarters for the laundry machines, alerting residents when a package arrived for them, and providing a listening ear. Her hospitality was gracious and welcoming.

In her free time, Sister Humbeline loved to tat, enjoyed opera and musicals, and watching “Jeopardy” and “Wheel of Fortune.” She was energized by listening to the stories of the older Sisters and the sights of nature.

Her friends observed how good she was at mentoring the younger Sisters who were in formation. She was always “game for something new and exciting,” like camping and bonfires, rafting, hiking, vacations, and trips to new places. She was often the first to volunteer for a task and initiated her service as she saw a need. Her smile and sense of humor were infectious.

In 2015, on the occasion of Sister Humbeline’s 70th Jubilee, she shared this reflection:

What a privilege! To celebrate 70 years of religious profession during the year Pope Francis has dedicated to Consecrated Life. Following his suggestion, I look to the past with gratitude for God’s call, for this Community for accepting me as I am, and for family and friends who walked with me. I look forward with confidence and joy to whatever God has in store for me.

Sister Humbeline was called to enter the fullness of everlasting life on April 25, 2024. She had been in hospice at St. Francis Convent. Father Byron Haaland, SCJ, anointed her the previous day, and Sisters began sitting with her. Sister Regine Ehm and CNAs Gracie, Moriah, Loida, Melanie and Shannon were present when Sister Humbeline died peacefully.

A child of God has gone home after a life marked by generosity and love.

“See what love God has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” 1 John 3:1

~ Sisters †Marie Colette Roy and Marcia Lunz, OSF