

# FEATURE

## SSJ's

Continued from page 17

"It is a joyous, grace-filled time," Sister Rosalma said of her jubilee. "It is a time of gratitude to God for all that he has done and allowed me to do."



For 40 of her years as a Sister of St. Joseph, **Sister Teresa Gerard Specksgoor, SSJ**, devoted herself to education.

"I loved teaching the children," Sister Teresa Gerard said. "I enjoyed the interaction with the children and their parents. It was a real joy for me."

She taught elementary school students at St. John the Evangelist (1931-36), St. Mary's in Dansville (1936-39), St. Mary's in Elmira (1939-45), St. Agnes in Avon (1945-46, 1949-53), and Immaculate Conception in Ithaca (1946-49). In 1953, she joined the staff at St. Mary's in Canandaigua, teaching eighth grade and serving as principal. Six years later, she went to teach junior high school students at St. James in Waverly and, from 1965-71, she was at St. Anne in Palmyra. She also served as the principal of those schools.

While teaching, Sister Teresa Gerard also accepted the role of student. She earned her bachelor's degree in education from Nazareth College, and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in English and history from the school.

She retired from teaching in 1971. Since then, the Rochester native has concentrated on her prayer ministry, living at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse and now at the St. Joseph Convent Infirmary.

"Ever since I was a child I wanted to be a sister," Sister Teresa Gerard said. "It's made me so happy."

## 60 years

Teaching meant a great deal to **Sister Agatha Corgel, SSJ**.



"Each child was special, and I always received a great amount of respect and love from them," Sister Agatha said.

Sister Agatha spent more than 37 years in teaching, 23 of which were at the junior high level.

She taught at St. Francis Xavier (1942-45), Corpus Christi (1945-50), Our Lady of Lourdes (1950-54), St. Mary in Elmira (1954-57), St. Patrick in Corning (1957-58), Nativity in Brockport (1958-61), Sacred Heart in Auburn (1961-63), Sacred Heart Cathedral (1963-66), St. Paul in Oswego (1966-67, 1973-74), Most Precious Blood (1967-68), Our Lady of Perpetual Help (1968-71), St. Ambrose (1971-73) and St. Augustine (1974-79).

Born and raised in Ithaca, Sister Agatha graduated from Ithaca High School in 1939.

She earned her teaching certificate from Nazareth Normal School, and later went on to earn a bachelor's degree in education and a bachelor's degree in English and social studies, both from Nazareth College.

After retiring from teaching in 1979, Sister Agatha joined the administrative staff at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse. She served in the finance department, working on health insurance benefits for sisters.

"This was a great experience for me," Sister Agatha said. "It was a new way I could serve the congregation and help the sisters."

Sister Agatha shared similar sentiments when recalling the past 60 years as a Sister of St. Joseph.

"Religious life has been good to me," she said. "I have enjoyed serving God and the congregation."

Sister Agatha retired in 1994. She now serves in prayer ministry and resides at St.

Joseph Convent Infirmary.

**Sister Concetta Mitrano, SSJ**, often says a prayer she learned from one of her first-grade religion students. He wanted to thank God for something special and said, "Thank you, Lord, for the love you put in my heart."



"I love that prayer," Sister Concetta said.

And this year, Sister Concetta thanks God for 60 years of religious life.

"I believe that I have received more than I have given," the Rochester native said.

Sister Concetta devoted 45 years to teaching elementary school students at Corpus Christi (1942), St. Patrick in Corning (1943), St. Michael in Penn Yan (1943-51), Holy Trinity in Webster (1951-60), St. Joseph's Villa (1960-61), Holy Apostles (1961-62), St. Patrick in Mt. Morris (1962-65), St. Anthony of Padua (1965-68), Our Lady of Perpetual Help (1968-80), and St. Joseph in Wayland (1980-87).

A graduate of Nazareth Academy, Sister Concetta went on to earn a teaching certificate from Nazareth Normal School. She later earned a bachelor's degree in education and a bachelor of arts degree in English and history from Nazareth College.

Since retiring from education in 1987, she has worked in the altar bread department at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse. This department provides the altar breads for area parishes. She also works in the congregation's archives and Cornerstone Crafts Shop.

Sister Concetta has two biological sisters in the congregation, Sisters Cora Marie and Ann Regina. She also has a brother, Fr. Joseph C. Mitrano, who is a Basilian priest.

## 50 years

**Sister Marie Adelaide Shire, SSJ**, is grateful for her years in education.



"I loved teaching, and I loved the children," Sister Marie Adelaide said.

The Rochester native graduated from West High School. After she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph, she

taught at Holy Apostles (1951-52), St. Mary in Elmira (1952-54), St. Anthony of Padua (1954-58), St. Mary in Canandaigua (1958-62), Christ the King (1962-63), St. Joseph in Wayland (1963-64), St. Stanislaus (1964-66) and St. John the Evangelist in Greece (1966-70).

During this time, Sister Marie Adelaide also earned a bachelor of science degree in education from Nazareth College.

In 1970, she changed ministries and worked on the administrative staff at St. John the Evangelist.

"I had a lot of business experience, so I went into more office work," she said. "But I spent 10 years at St. John the Evangelist altogether, and I made quite a few lasting friendships there."

In 1976, Sister Marie Adelaide went to work at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse. Sixteen years later, she joined the congregation's archives staff as an assistant.

"This work has deepened my love and respect for the Sisters of St. Joseph," Sister Marie Adelaide said of her present ministry. "It has been truly rewarding for me."

She added, "I know in my heart I had a vocation to be a Sister of St. Joseph."

**Sister Barbara Joan Lynaugh, SSJ**, has enjoyed working in a variety of ministries, from teaching to health insurance.

"Each ministry has had its own challenges," she reflected. "All these ministries have evolved into the other. I wanted to be open to what the spirit was calling me to do."



Each was a natural progression."

She grew up in Canandaigua and graduated from Canandaigua Academy.

Sister Barbara Joan started out in teaching, where she worked at St. Francis Xavier (1951-53), Holy Rosary (1953-55), St. Paul in Oswego (1955-62), Blessed Sacrament (1962-64), and St. Ambrose (1964-69). For five years she also served as principal at St. Mary in Auburn. While teaching, Sister Barbara Joan earned a bachelor's degree in education from Nazareth College.

In 1974, Sister Barbara Joan decided to make a career change, becoming a pastoral assistant at St. Agnes in Avon. Her work in the parish for 10 years later led Sister Barbara Joan to enter a funeral ministry.

"No one else had ever been in the funeral home ministry before," Sister Barbara Joan said. "I just saw that while I was a pastoral assistant, families experienced such pain and grief, yet they had to cope with all the details of a funeral."

Sister Barbara Joan worked for a funeral director in the Southern Tier for three years, after which she decided to focus on families and their health insurance needs. As a health-care consultant, she helped people process their checks, pay bills, or oversee their insurance plan.

Sister Barbara Joan has served in this ministry since 1987. For the past six years, she has also served on the staff in the congregation's finance office, coordinating health insurance for the sisters.

"I love working with people," she said. "There were often a lot of problems I could help them with. They trusted me. I became a friend, and it was very meaningful to me."

Social justice has been the cornerstone of 50 years of religious life for **Sister Eileen Conheady, SSJ**.



For the last 27 years, Sister Eileen (formerly Sister Joseph Eileen) has concentrated on working in community outreach programs, specifically with women and children.

"I have been privileged to minister

among women and children who are homeless," the Rochester native said. "Their resilience and hope for a better future inspired me."

Sister Eileen was instrumental in founding the MORE program, which was devoted to women in changing lifestyles. She also worked in ministries serving minorities and the mentally ill population. She served as director of MORE and the Women's Place as part of the Catholic Family Center. Today, she is a community outreach worker at Holy Rosary Parish.

"I believe that God called me to this life through my family, my own gifts and talents and religious people in my early life. I have always loved the ideals of the Sisters of St. Joseph and have found that I am always challenged to become more. It is a life of great meaning."

Prior to her community outreach work, Sister Eileen earned a bachelor's and master's degree in history from Nazareth College. She later received a master's degree in history from Oxford University, and a doctorate in history from the University of Chicago. She taught the subject at Sacred Heart Cathedral (1953-54) and St. Agnes High School (1954-61).

"This year fills me with gratitude and joy," Sister Eileen said. "The Sisters of St. Joseph have ministered in a quiet and hidden way, proclaiming God's love for the world. We inherit a rich tradition of prayer and service."

Sister Eileen hopes to continue that tradition and service for years to come.

Tending to the care of the elderly brings great joy to **Sister Marian Johnson, SSJ**, (formerly Sister Joan Michael).

Sister Marian is a home health aide for



Sisters Care—a ministry of caring for the elderly or ill in their homes. Services include grocery shopping, light housekeeping, transportation to health-care appointments, and maintaining prescription schedules. Most important, however, is the offering of presence and companionship.

"I receive much more than I give," Sister Marian said. "I find this work to be very rewarding and fulfilling."

The Rochester native is enthusiastic about Sisters Care. She has worked in the ministry for the past six years. Prior to that, she served for 43 years in education.

She taught at Sacred Heart (1951-54), St. Paul in Oswego (1954-58), Christ the King (1958-61), St. Rose in Lima (1961-65), St. Jerome in East Rochester (1965-67), St. Theodore (1974-91), and All Saints' Junior High (1991-94).

"My primary ministry has been teaching, and for 20 of those years I taught language arts," Sister Marian said. "Though it was a challenging experience at times, I considered it very valuable and necessary in guiding teens through their difficult years."

Sister Marian entered the Sisters of St. Joseph after graduating from Nazareth Academy. She later earned a bachelor's degree in history and a master's in education from Nazareth College.

For **Sister Beatrice Ganley, SSJ**, looking



back on 50 years as a Sister of St. Joseph is like "sifting through a treasure chest of precious gems."

"Each experience shines with grace," she said. "I am awed and sent into quiet gratitude for my varied ministries."

Sister Beatrice entered the order after graduating from Nazareth Academy. She went on to spend the next 31 years teaching at St. Bridget (1951-52), St. Patrick in Seneca Falls (1952-54), Nazareth Hall (1954-58), St. Agnes in Avon (1958-60), St. Theodore (1960-62), St. Monica (1962-64), St. Augustine (1964-66), St. John the Evangelist in Greece (1966-67), and Nazareth Academy (1967-82).

During this time, the Rochester native earned a bachelor of science degree in education and a bachelor of arts degree in English, both from Nazareth College. She later received a master's degree in English from SUNY Brockport.

For seven years, Sister Beatrice worked as a freelance writer and served as director of communications for the Sisters of St. Joseph. She handled all public relations and wrote and edited their newsletter.

In 1989, she joined the Nazareth College faculty as a part-time communications consultant. Three years later she became a part-time professor at the college. Throughout her religious career, Sister Beatrice has also maintained her love of writing and poetry.

"We make our choices and God's spirit enters into them with us," Sister Beatrice said of religious life. "Religious life in the Sisters of St. Joseph is the nurturing soil in which I have grown to become who I am. It is a good way to live."

## 25 years

Being a recreation therapist at the ARC of Monroe County offers **Sister Janet Elizabeth Meeker, SSJ**, the satisfaction of helping others.

Sister Janet works closely with adults who have disabilities and helps them find ways to enjoy life to the fullest.

"Right now I work with a group of 15 to 20 adults," Sister Janet explained. "We are mainly doing stenciling of greeting cards and tote bags and other craft activities."

Sister Janet graduated from Notre Dame High School in Elmira and worked for a

Continued on next page