

The Sights and Sounds of 60 Years



Sister Joelle Mauer currently ministering in Owensboro, Kentucky, is observing her 60th year as a Holy Cross Sister. Sister Joelle, daughter of the deceased Joseph and Helen Mauer, grew up in Poniatoski, WI. After graduating from Holy Family School she attended Our Lady of the Holy Cross High School, Merrill, where she became acquainted with the Holy Cross Sisters and joined the community in 1949.

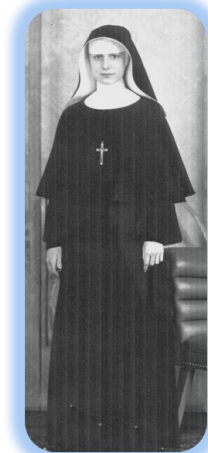
While attending Our Lady of the Holy Cross she was deeply impressed with Sister Maria Theodosia Laufer's love for the community. She was principal, teacher of the sciences and music teacher. "I was awe-struck in her classes and I appreciated her concern and positive direction," Sister Joelle said. Another faculty member whom she loved was Sister Jeanne d'Arc, mathematician and physical education teacher. "She spent after-school hours with us and had everything we needed in her huge pockets," remembers Sister Joelle.

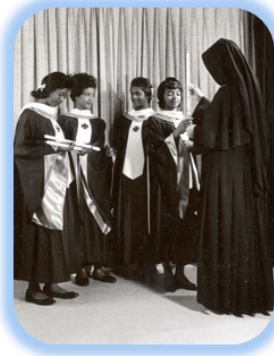
After profession of vows in 1951 Sister Joelle was missioned to rural Louisiana with the sister who had been her inspiration and ideal, Sister Maria Theodosia.

Sister Joelle remembers the tense days in Louisiana in 1953. "Archbishop Rummel sent letters to all parishes decreeing an end to segregation in the churches. Some white parishioners presumed that because we were from the north, we instigated it. Father Daniel Becnel, pastor of Our Lady of Peace, refused to take back his announcement to abide by the archbishop's order," sister said. Sister Marie Theodosia and Sister Joelle heard shots while a mob of white men gathered on the church grounds next to their house and feared that the pastor had been killed. "We were ready for martyrdom—but both Father Becnel and we were unharmed. We did receive threatening calls and gunshots around the house, but eventually peace returned with our efforts, and today the area is a model of bi-racial unity," added Sister Joelle.



Mother & S. Joelle





In the early days of work along the Mississippi they traveled as much as 200 miles a day to all the public schools teaching religion, plus choir practices and convert classes in the evening; yet they remained well and un-tired.

The work of the Sisters in the area of liturgy and music was noticed by Bishop Robert Tracy when the new diocese of Baton Rouge was formed out of the archdiocese in 1961. He established a commission for liturgy, art and music and appointed both of the sisters to the commission. Later in 1968 he requested Sister Marie Theodosia and Sister Joelle to staff an Office of Liturgy in the diocese, which they did until 1975.



S. Marie Theodosia & S. Joelle

In addition to her work in religious education and parish music, she served as Vocation Director for the Holy Cross Sisters, director of senior housing facility, coordinator of senior Holy Cross Sisters at Bell Tower Residence in Merrill and liturgical/musician at the chapel. In 2008 she moved to Calvert City, Kentucky, to work among the poor with Sister Mary Angela Sackmann. In 2010, they moved to Owensboro, Kentucky, to continue their ministry.

In reviewing her 60 years as a Holy Cross Sister, Sister Joelle said she enjoyed all of them. With music as her first love, she was thrilled to be the organist at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge while Sister Maria Theodosia directed the choir. She added, "When I was able to accept the position of Director of Liturgy and Music at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, IA, it was a fulfillment of a dream."



S. Joelle at St. Joseph Cathedral, Baton Rouge, LA, May 16, 1976

At St. Ambrose Cathedral she was a spiritual director for the parish retreat program, Christ Renews His Parish. She said to be instrumental in bringing people back to the sacraments after as many as 20 years was a touching grace.

Our Jubilarian summed up her many years of ministry, "In every parish I have lived or served I have been involved in the liturgical music and it has been a gift I truly enjoyed. The close friendships from this ministry have endured until now."

