
URSULINE SISTERS OF TILDONK 2020 JUBILARIANS

September 29, 2020

This September the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province congratulate *Sr. Teresita Catalano, Sr. Mary James Fox and Sr. Mary Grace Hodnett* as they celebrate 70 years of religious life, and *Sr. Denise Farrands, Sr. Bridget Olwell, Sr. Janet Schreiner and Sr. Alice Traynor* celebrating 60 years of religious life. We honor these women for their lifetime of service dedicated to God.

Province Leader Sr. Joanne Callahan says, "The U.S. Province is delighted to share with you the brief, but profound history of each of our Jubilarians. The Sisters and Associates are disappointed that we cannot have our usual mass and dinner to celebrate this year. I am so proud of all that each Sister has accomplished, and the way each has inspired the rest of us who share community with them. May God continue to bless them and keep them safe and healthy."

As young women they were all influenced by Ursuline Sisters who encouraged them to listen to God's call...



Sr. Teresita Catalano felt called to be an Ursuline as a student of Nativity of the Blessed Mary School in Ozone Park. She is grateful for the wonderful education and the spirituality and dedication of the Sisters who taught her. After earning a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education and a degree in Music Education, she taught in many schools as well as parish religious education. Her love of music was shared with her students, who were members of her choir and piano classes. After retirement she continued to be a piano instructor.

Her former students joyfully recall Sr. Teresita as a firm but caring teacher who had great confidence in them. They are grateful for her loving guidance, her sense of humor and her special talents which gave many of them a lifelong appreciation for all kinds of music.



Reflecting on her 70 years of religious life, Sr. Teresita says, "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the gifts of life, love, family, friends and community which He has given to me?"

Her lifelong friend, Sr. Mary Joan of Arc Spelman says, "Sr. Teresita is an intelligent, gentle woman who does not hurry to speak, enjoys a good laugh and has a sense of humor. She is sensitive to others and has a remarkable memory for events, names and prayer requests." Sr. Joan of Arc continues, "I give thanks to God for the gift of Teresita and for a friendship that has lasted 73 years."



Sr. Mary James Fox was introduced to the Ursulines as a student at Our Lady of Grace in Howard Beach. Inspired by her Ursuline teachers, particularly Sr. Paula Carey, she followed the call to become a Sister and educator. Sr. James ministered in elementary education at several schools in Queens, Long Island and Connecticut, then spent the last years of her teaching career at Holy Family High School in Huntington, NY. She then served as bookkeeper for Our Lady of Mercy School in Hicksville and Our Lady of Hope School in Middle Village. Sr. James also served her Province as an assistant in the Finance Office where she always lightened up the mood with her sense of humor.



Elena Candelaria, bookkeeper for the Ursuline Sisters, fondly remembers her days working with Sr. James: "Sr. James is very smart. I loved working with her and listening to her stories about her teaching years. She is very funny, and we've had many adventures together." Elena continues, "We used to call ourselves 'Partners in Crime.' I really miss working with her. She has a very special place in my heart."

Sr. Mary Grace Hodnett entered the Ursulines because of her great love for children and the wonderful encouragement she received from the Sisters teaching at Our Lady of Grace in Howard Beach. She served as an elementary teacher for 22 years. Then, seeing the great need for parish social ministry, she served as Director of Parish Social Outreach at St. William's in Seaford for 26 years. She credits most of her success in this endeavor to the tireless efforts and commitment of the parish volunteers and members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. She



continued teaching children in the parish religious education program right up until her retirement in 2005. Afterwards, she volunteered as a facilitator for senior citizens at Maria Regina parish in Seaford and for the Sisters in retirement at St. Ursula Center.



Sr. Catherine Talia says of Sr. Mary Grace, “I have had the privilege of observing her loving care for the poor and less fortunate in her work in Parish Outreach at St. William the Abbot. I have also had the privilege of helping Sr. Mary Grace discern some of the changes in her life that brought her to the next step on her journey. Throughout these changes over the years, she has maintained her sense of serving the other graciously and with a full heart. Even now, at Maria Regina Residence, she continues to do that as much as she is able.”

Sr. Mary Grace reflects, “Looking back on my years as an Ursuline Sister, I know that I have been inspired and blessed by my family, by my religious congregation and by the many wonderful people whose love and commitment have taught me about the presence of God.” She continues, “Celebrations are wonderful because we come together to acknowledge God’s gifts, and today 70 years of my religious life.”

Sr. Denise Farrands' experiences with the nuns in Connecticut who taught her as a child planted a seed that blossomed into a religious vocation and instilled in her a love for teaching. When she was introduced to Mother Ursula and the Ursuline Sisters in Blue Point, she knew that God had called her. Sr. Denise touched the lives of hundreds of children throughout her teaching career, primarily at Our Lady of Victory in New Haven, CT where she taught for over 40 years. One of her proudest moments came in 1988 when she received the Miriam Joseph Farrell Award for Distinguished Teaching presented by the National Catholic Educational Association. She deeply believes in Catholic education and has seen the difference it can mean in families, the Church and the world.



Sr. Denise says, “It has been an enriching experience to interact with so many families and students and, hopefully, to have made a positive difference in their lives.” In fact, during the writing of this article, a former student wrote to Sr. Denise: “I am writing to thank you for the impact you had on my life and countless other students. Thank you for your dedication to teaching and the care you showed me and all your students. I still

carry with me a life lesson you imparted: 'You don't need to like everyone, but you do need to love everyone.' I try my best to live up to those words each day.'"

Sr. Gertrude Goldman says of her friend, "Sr. Denise loved teaching and has a hundred stories about classroom and field trip happenings that she is always willing to share with others." She also speaks of Sr. Denise's great kindness and generosity: "Sr. Denise is always ready and willing to help others in any way she can without regard to her own time and energy."

Reflecting on her Jubilee, Sr. Denise says, "I thank God daily for 60 years of blessings as an Ursuline Sister of Tildonk. I cherish the multitude of blessings that have graced my life in this beautiful community."



Sr. Bridget Olwell grew up on a farm in Ireland and came to the U.S. in 1958. She met Sr. Jean Redigan at St. William the Abbot in Seaford when she went to visit her uncle, a priest who was stationed at the parish. Upon meeting Sr. Jean, Sr. Bridget's desire to enter religious life was confirmed.

Sr. Bridget earned a bachelor's degree in Education from St. John's University and a master's from St. Joseph's College in West Hartford as well as a certification in Supervision and Administration from Fordham. Her teaching ministry spanned 42 years, the last 14 years of which she served as principal of St. Margaret School in Middle Village, NY. After retiring from education, she continues to serve as pastoral associate for St. Margaret Parish, where most of the parish's spiritual formation programs are her responsibility. Sr. Bridget was inducted into the St. Margaret Hall of Fame in 2013.

Sr. Bridget says, "My colleagues know that my one and only response in any discussion is 'God is good'. Yes, God has been very good to me all my life and especially these past sixty years as an Ursuline Sister. I've been blessed with a loving family, caring friends, good health, and supportive ministry opportunities which enabled the young and not so young to get to know Jesus through my presence and teaching. For all this I am most grateful."

She adds, "I trust that God will continue to bless all our Sisters who are celebrating special milestones at this time. I do believe that St. Angela is in our midst furthering our prayers during these challenging times in our world. May I/we continue to respond with deep faith and earnest prayer."

“Sr. Bridget is a joy to be with, kind to all and always available,” says her good friend Sr. Judith O’Connor. “Of course, we all know she loves her ministry for the Church, her family in County Meath, and our Ursuline Community. May she be abundantly blessed with love and good health as she has blessed us, for many years to come.”

Sr. Janet Schreiner met the Ursulines as an adolescent at Our Lady of Grace in Howard Beach. Their spirit of openness and kindness touched her. After earning her degree in education, Sr. Janet spent her early years of ministry as an elementary and high school teacher, where she loved helping to develop values in children. She then returned to school for a degree in nursing and worked as a community health nurse with the Nursing Sisters Home Visiting Service. Sr. Janet also ministered as a school counselor and worked at Hope House Ministries as a counselor for 15 years. Since her retirement, she continues to volunteer with Hope House Ministries and animal rescue programs.



Sr. Janet credits her diverse ministry history with her ability to easily connect with people. She reflects, “Throughout my life I have been blessed with a deep sense of wonder which no darkness has been able to dim. I am grateful for this gift flowing from the *God Within* who encompasses and sustains all reality. I thank all the people and creatures in my life who I have ministered to, knowing that in truth they have ministered to me in all the possibilities of growth and fullness of being.”

Looking back on years of memories, Sr. Laurentine Morgan says Sr. Janet is “sometimes boisterous and often irreverent, but always reflective, philosophical, empathetic, caring and poetic – filled with a love of nature and indeed all God’s creation which nourishes and sustains us all. We hold her close knowing her desire to shine the light of God’s loving presence among us.”



Like her fellow Jubilarians, **Sr. Alice Traynor** was inspired by the Ursulines Sisters early in her life. “I take myself back to 1958 when I first met the Sisters at Our Lady of Grace in Howard Beach,” says Sr. Alice. “Their hospitality and caring really attracted me.” Entering the Ursulines was a perfect match for her to fulfill her desire to teach. Sr. Alice earned a bachelor’s degree in Education from St. John’s University and a master’s from St. Joseph’s College in West Hartford. She served as teacher and principal in several schools throughout Long Island,

Queens and Brooklyn. After her retirement from education she ministered to the elderly in nursing homes and parishes near her home.

Sr. Alice reflects, "After 60 years as an Ursuline Sister, I thank God for giving me the gift of a religious vocation. I thank the community for a life lived dedicated to the Lord and for the many opportunities to be of service. A very special thank you to my family, always supporting me to this day."

"Sr. Alice has had many professional accomplishments," says Sr. Geraldine Conklin, "but what makes her special is her ability to gain the trust of those with whom she works and lives. This gift has enabled her to expand the ministerial impact of her life. Alice stays connected to her family and friends through good times and bad. She is prayerful, loyal, honest and truthful. I am grateful to be counted among her friends."



*Sisters Denise, Alice, Janet and Bridget
celebrating their 25th Jubilee in 1985*

May the Lord's blessings, joy and peace be upon Sisters Teresita, James, Mary Grace, Denise, Bridget, Janet and Alice, as well as all of our Sisters living and deceased.

We invite you to join us in wishing a happy anniversary to these extraordinary women. If you would like to send a card to any of the Sisters you may do so through our Province Office: 8115 Utopia Parkway, Jamaica, NY 11432. Donations to the Ursuline Sisters' Retirement Fund in honor of our Jubilarians may also be sent to the same address.