

# 2025 Jubilee

## SISTER JOAN PENZENSTADLER

First Profession



July 28, 1965

*Celebrating 60 years*



Born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, **Sister Joan Penzenstadler** has lived a ministry dedicated to educating the students of her home state of Wisconsin. As soon as she earned her bachelor's degree from Mount Mary College (now University) in Milwaukee, Sister Joan was in the classroom, instructing high schoolers for Messmer High School in Milwaukee, Marinette Catholic Central High in Marinette and McDonell Central High in Chippewa Falls. In 1978, she achieved a master's degree in theology from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. That same year, she started a ministry of religious education and youth ministry for the students of St. Leonard in Muskego. From 1981-1984, she returned to her alma mater of Mount Mary University (MMU), this time as a theology teacher. She then re-embraced the role of student herself, moving to the east coast where she attended Boston College and earned her doctorate in religious education. With the completion of her degree, she began her next chapter at MMU, where she served as an associate professor from 1998-2000, and then a professor of theology from 2000-2003. In 2004, she became the special assistant to the president for mission and identity at MMU, a position she held for two years. Starting in 2006, she balanced two ministries, serving as co-director for associates in the Milwaukee Province and as spiritual director for many people in the area. Completing her work with associates, she continued her spiritual direction practice as she returned to Mount Mary in 2008 and became the vice-president for mission and identity, a role she held until retiring in 2022. She now resides at Trinity Woods in Milwaukee, where she continues to be a spokesperson for the SSND mission on campus and wherever she is called.

### What advice or words of wisdom would you want to impart to others?

The most important work remaining for me is to become fully awake, to pay attention. When my intention is focused on being fully present, I find myself moving from a self-referent world into an inclusive love.

### Share a brief reflection on a ministry experience that was especially meaningful to you and why.

As a theology professor at Mount Mary, I was privileged to teach the Person and Mission of Jesus course. I recall a moment when I was presenting how counter-cultural, how compassionate Jesus' ministry was, and the class was swept up in that amazing realization. You could have heard a pin drop as the students seemed to hold their breath. I shall never forget the power of that connection.

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