

Sr. Marie Joseph Porrello, OP – 60 Year Jubilee

Sr. Marie Joseph Porrello, OP, is celebrating her 60th Jubilee as a Dominican Sister of St. Mary of the Springs, Columbus, Ohio. She credits the Blessed Mother and her mother with the gift of her vocation to religious life.

“After graduating from St. Mary’s Academy, a Dominican high school in New Haven, Connecticut, I reflected on what God wanted me to do,” Sister says. “I asked the Holy Spirit for guidance. Through prayer, I realized that God was calling me to the St. Mary of the Springs Dominicans in Columbus. To me, an Easterner, Ohio seemed like Western wilderness. When I got here, there wasn’t any wilderness, but I had found my calling.”

She earned her bachelor’s degree in education from Ohio Dominican College and taught for 25 years in primary grades in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. In Ohio, she taught at Our Lady of Peace and Holy Spirit in Columbus; at St. Mary, Lancaster; and at St. Anthony, Steubenville. In Pennsylvania, she served at St. Lawrence, Pittsburgh, and St. Brendan, Braddock; and in New York, at St. Mark, Brooklyn; St. Augustine, Ossining; and St. Andrew, Flushing. “For 25 years, I enjoyed teaching the little ones in elementary school and preparing them to meet the Lord in the Sacraments,” Sister says. “When I left the classroom, however, my real joy was my 13 years in pastoral care because I was preparing critically ill people to meet the Lord.”

Sr. Marie Joseph was commissioned in 1974 by Bishop Edward Herrmann as the first Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist designated to visit the sick and elderly. “Many of the sick in the nursing homes had not had Communion for many years,” Sister says. She organized a comprehensive program of pastoral care for residents of three nursing homes and became a volunteer chaplain caring for the spiritual needs of the sick at Park Medical Hospital, which became the OSU Hospital East. Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman has recognized Sr. Marie Joseph for “Outstanding Volunteer Service” at the Ohio State University Hospital East.

Sister was commended by Rev. Richard Lebarty, former assistant pastor at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Columbus, for her work in pastoral ministry to the sick and elderly and for her compassionate, understanding nature and genuine love for the elderly and the sick. Sister ensured that the Sacraments were available to the nursing-home residents and that Mass was celebrated. She visited the sick and shut-ins of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish and developed a telephone ministry to show the love and concern of the parish for the sick. Sister also volunteered in the Office of Communications at St. Mary of the Springs. “My prayer life and my relationship with the Lord Jesus and Our Lady have sustained me over all of these years of religious life,” Sister says. “I have no regrets.”