

Sisters celebrate summer jubilees at St. Francis Convent, Hankinson

The Sisters of St. Francis in Hankinson have been having a busy summer of celebrations this year in honor of five of their Sisters who marked jubilees of their religious consecrations in May, June and July.

On May 20, **Sister Mathilde Pichlmeier**, 96, was honored for her *first* 75 years of fidelity to Christ as one of his consecrated brides. Bishop Aquila offered the Mass of thanksgiving concelebrated by several other priests. Ten of her family members from Germany also came to help her celebrate.

In 1934 Sister Mathilde and three other young Sisters who had volunteered for the missions in the United States were sent by their superior from Dillingen, Germany. They arrived in Hankinson on the 4th of July. Beginning in 1937 Sister Mathilde was assigned to the Vestment Department. She headed the department from 1957 until her retirement in 2006. This work and her 35 years as the administrator of St. Francis Convent led her to become well acquainted with many priests, clergy of other denominations and laity, which brought her much joy.

Three Sisters celebrated together a combined 170 years of religious consecration on June 15 with a Mass offered by our dean, Father Dale Lagodinski, and concelebrated by many other priests. **Sister Elaine Marie Roggenbuck** marked her Golden Jubilee, and **Sister Leonida Schmidt** and **Sister Annella Miller** both marked 60 years of profession. The Sisters were grateful for the many clergy, family members and friends who were able to join them for the day.

Sister Elaine Marie, the only child born to John & Appolonia Roggenbuck of Bellingham, Minn., arrived after her parents' 14-year-long wait for a child. Sister attended St. Francis Academy in Hankinson during her junior and senior years of high school, where she became acquainted with the Sisters. When her parents were told by the Superior that their daughter had a vocation, her father's first words were, "Oh, we aren't worthy." Generously they encouraged their daughter to accept the vocation God was offering her. For 50 years Sister Elaine Marie has as generously served the church, spending over 40 of them at St. Anne's Guest Home in Grand Forks where she serves today as the convent superior and the business manager of that mission.

Sister Leonida Schmidt grew up on a farm near Towner and attended St. Francis Academy for all four years of high school. From the time she first set foot in a classroom until now she has not stopped going to school. Sister Leonida has taught elementary grades and administered Catholic schools for over 50 years. In 1989 she received the *Distinguished Principal Award* from the National Catholic Education Association at their national convention in Chicago. Sister Leonida retired from school administration in 1996 when she was elected to her congregation's general council which necessitated a move to Rome. For the last seven years she has been an almost-full-time substitute teacher in the Fargo Catholic Schools Network, at St. John's in Wahpeton and in area public schools. In addition to teaching, she is now serving her second term on the provincial council of her community.

Sister Annella Miller, also from rural Towner, has been stationed at St. Anne's Guest Home since 1983. She can be heard on Catholic radio, KWTL 1370 AM, promoting Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration at St. Anne's Guest Home Chapel in Grand Forks. Serving the residents at St. Anne's in social services and spending hours in prayer make up Sister Annella's life. She is dedicated to pro-life activities, and is using her many opportunities to share God's word and love with others. Reflecting on her 60 years of consecrated life she said, "My wish is to give glory to God as long as I live and to tell others of the Good

News, so all of us can praise him forever in his Kingdom.”

Sister Magdalen Schaan, 90, originally from Rugby, was the last Hankinson Franciscan celebrating a jubilee of profession in 2009. She marked 70 years of religious life on July 22 when her nephew, Father Daniel Syverstad, O.P., from the Western Dominican Province in Oakland, offered a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Francis Convent Chapel. Along with all the Sisters of her community, many of her family members participated in her celebration.

A special part of every Jubilee Mass is when the Sisters renew their vows “to live for the duration of their lives for the sake of the Kingdom of God.” With an iron will to overcome the challenges of crippling arthritis and an eye disease, Sister Magdalen did this faithfully from 1939 until her retirement in 1992 while serving as a cook in a monastery in Chicago and later in the kitchens of Catholic hospitals in North Dakota. She was particularly happy to bring Christ’s healing touch to the sick by visiting patients personally to ask what they felt like having, believing that good meals were a part of every healing.

To learn more about the Franciscan Sisters of Dillingen in the Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Diocese of Fargo, visit their Web site at www.fargodiocese.-org/vocations/sfc.