

This story was originally printed in the September 2011 issue of New Earth, the newspaper for the Diocese of Fargo.

Sisters of Mary of the Presentation celebrate jubilees, totaling 340 years

Sister Helen Backes, Sister Eloise Marie Pulskamp, Sister Mary Ann Schmitz, Sister Dorothy Bertsch and Sister Frances Marie Voigt celebrated jubilees that totaled 340 years of dedication to the Lord with the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation.

Many family members were present to celebrate July 24 as Father Claude Seeberger presided at the jubilee Mass.

Sister Helen Backes celebrated 80 years of religious profession. She was born and raised in Foxholm, where she received her elementary education in country schools, before attending high school in Willow City. She joined the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation in 1929 and received her religious training in France. After her return to the United States, she earned a registered nurse degree from St. Margaret's School of Nursing and later a post-graduate degree in obstetrics in Peoria, Ill. She worked in hospitals owned by the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation for 40 years and then moved to Maryvale to serve as the night nurse for the elderly retired sisters. She continues to serve her community. She smiled and wheeled around her cart as she said: "I do this because I like to run around."

Sister Eloise Marie Pulskamp celebrated 70 years and is also retired at Maryvale. Sister Eloise Marie was born in Hillsboro, and received her elementary education in the area country schools. She entered the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation in 1938. After her profession, she stayed in France and worked in a school there, until she was taken by the Germans to a prison camp for American citizens. She returned to the U.S. in 1944 and obtained a bachelor's degree in Washington, D.C. Sister Eloise Marie taught in the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation primary schools for most of her religious life. In 2004, she retired to Maryvale. This summer she returned to Princeton, Ill., to accompany Sister Elaine Lange. She was delighted to see all the old friends she had made there. Sister Eloise Marie keeps herself busy by crocheting prayer shawls for the sisters' long-term care facilities. She has made many beautiful shawls with interesting patterns and colors.

Sister Mary Ann Schmitz celebrated 65 years of service. She was born in Harvey and attended country schools for her elementary education. She attended high school at Notre Dame Academy in Willow City and received her bachelor's degree from the College of Great Falls, Mont., and her master's in education from St. Louis University. Many years were spent in the classrooms of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation schools. After retiring from the teaching profession, she went to Fargo where she now visits the residents at Rosewood on Broadway and Villa Maria. She has become a good companion to the residents and said she finds satisfaction in listening and speaking to them.

Sister Dorothy Bertsch also celebrated her 65th anniversary. She was born in Harvey and attended grade school there. She attended high school at St. Cecilia in Harvey and St. Aloysius in Oakwood. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Great Falls, Mont., and a master's in education administration at St. Louis University. She taught in most of the schools owned by the sisters in North Dakota and then became a principal in Illinois schools. Sister Dorothy concluded her teaching profession in Rockford where she administered the parish's religious education program. Sister Dorothy is now a volunteer in the surgical waiting room at St. Margaret's Hospital in Spring Valley, Ill. Each day, she spends hours ministering to the

surgery patients by guiding and directing them and their families to the proper places they need for service.

Sister Frances Marie Voigt celebrated 60 years of profession. She was born in Elbowoods on the Fort Berthold reservation, where she attended grade school. She attended high school with the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation in Willow City. Her bachelor's degree was earned at Great Falls College and her master's in ministry was earned at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. After 37 years of teaching in the schools sponsored by the sisters, she began pastoral ministry in 1988. Much of that ministry was spent on the reservations in North Dakota, where she served First Nation people. Sister Frances Marie is now living at Maryvale, serving the sisters wherever she can. She delights in the outdoors and finds beauty in God's creation.