

## Sister Mary Lou Owczarzak, MSSp. *Celebrating 60 years of Religious Life*

I was born in Bay City, MI, on June 7, 1943, to Edward and Lucille (Talaga) Owczarzak. I am the 4th of 10 children. We were members of St. Stanislaus Parish and I attended school there for 12 years.

Growing up, family, religion and faith were a priority in our home and hearts. My grandparents lived with us and each evening they gathered us for our traditional prayers and rosary. We celebrated in our home many Polish customs and traditions.

With a deep sense of God's goodness and presence in my life, I continued to search for ways to deepen my prayer life and to serve God. After graduation, I became involved with the Catholic Youth Workers, spent a couple of summers working with the migrants, and then participated in a Cursillo with follow-up meetings.

Wanting to continue my search for a deeper relationship with the Lord, I made an appointment to see Fr. Mike Mahar about joining the Extension Lay Volunteers. He informed me that the training sessions were finished and asked if I would be willing to wait until next year. My response was something like I would probably be married or in the convent. I left there with an appointment to visit the Mission Sisters of the Holy Spirit. And that has changed everything.

On September 8, 1964, I entered the community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Spirit, located in the Diocese of Saginaw. God's call is persistent.

In terms of my education, I completed a Bachelor's degree at Mercy College in Detroit, a Master's Degree in Religious Education at Boston College, and a Master's in Christian Community Development from Regis College in Denver. I was blessed to have participated in a 100-day sabbatical at Sangre de Christo Retreat Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

My ministry in the diocese has been in Religious Education Formation. I was blessed to have ministered with the communities of Holy Spirit Parish, St. Athanasius Parish, St. Anthony Parish in Saginaw, and Assumption Parish in Larkin. The communities were faith-filled, spirit-filled, and a real joy to be in their midst.

I retired in 2013. I have volunteered as a Eucharistic Minister at Covenant Hospital, visited with patients through Southern Care Hospice and residents at St. Francis Home. I enjoy spending time with family and friends and traveling when possible.

For our 50th Anniversary in the Diocese of Saginaw, our community chose the following saying of Dag Hammarskjold for our motto: "For all that has been, thanks; for all that will be, yes". I say "yes" in the spirit of Mary, who pondered, questioned, challenged, always with a spirit of openness. I continue to say yes, trusting God's faithfulness, presence, and love in my life and in the life of our community.

