

**Faye Schwelitz**  
Associate since 1981



My journey with the School Sisters of St. Francis has been a long one. I have been an Associate for nearly 45 years and before that, a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis community for 25 years. A deep inner prompting – not fully understood, but continual – eventually led me elsewhere.

At the time, I was a biology teacher and in the midst of a master's program funded by the government. With the same funding, I entered a Ph.D. program, and, with that degree, became a faculty member at the University of Dayton. Early in my tenure at the university, I attended an intensive journal workshop by Ira Progoff, an experience that changed my life.

Journaling became a deep form of prayer and a way of being guided by the Counselor within. Through journaling, I was better able to navigate my new path in life and reflect on all aspects of it. I saw that my roots in the School Sister community were deep. At my core, I knew I needed to be where I was, but I also wanted to reconnect with the community. Some members who had stayed in touch suggested the Associate Relationship.

The journal remained a spiritual anchor and rudder through many changes and experiences in my life. These included my marriage, pursuing another doctorate (in psychology), and becoming a core faculty member in the School of Profession Psychology at Wright State University. It served me well on several trips abroad related to my research and that of my scientist husband (also an associate), a side trip to visit my friend Sister Ruth Vasen in Erlenbad, and three trips to India, where we also visited with the School Sisters of St. Francis community near Madurai. It brought me strength on a trip to San Cristobal, Mexico, to support Sister Ruth; when I moved from Ohio to Milwaukee; and at my husband's rather sudden death.

With Ira Progoff as both mentor and friend, I became a journal leader. I led journal workshops and retreats in the United States, Australia, and Ireland. For 12 years, I journaled with groups of men and the staff at the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas. I also gave a journal workshop at Maria Linden (I was scheduled to offer a longer follow-up, but due to the COVID pandemic, that didn't happen.) Most recently, I have been mentoring several women in Ohio and one in Ireland around leading workshops.

Being an associate has opened up new ways for me to take part in School Sisters of St. Francis ministries and broaden my perspective. For a time, I served on the Peace and Justice Committee and helped organize a presentation on human trafficking. I also worked on a small committee related to climate change.

I'm grateful for the bountiful experience of being an associate. I'm blessed with rich relationships with sisters and other associates, and I've been given opportunities to contribute to the community's ministries and to share the gift of intensive journaling.