

## **Karen Dosemagen**

### **Franciscan Associate since 2022**



My connection with Franciscanism spans much of my life, beginning at St. Joseph High School in Kenosha, Wisconsin, where I was taught by the School Sisters of Saint Francis (SSSF). In addition to giving me a quality education, the sisters introduced me to St. Francis of Assisi and the meaning of Franciscanism.

After high school, I attended UW-Whitewater where I earned a degree in education, which launched my teaching career. I taught primary grades in Kenosha public schools for 40 years. During those years, I was active in my local parish, serving on the parish council, teaching CCD, and lecturing.

In my free time, I learned the joy of travel! I had family who lived and worked overseas and they provided several opportunities for me to travel as their guest. More travel adventures with friends throughout the United States and Europe helped enlarge my world view. I came to understand how very much alike people's needs, wants, joys, and sorrows are. But my favorite place to travel is the Northwoods of Wisconsin. The forest environment offers a place of reflection, peace, and renewal. I go north as often as I am able.

Sister Kathy Rhey, a School Sister of St. Francis and family friend died tragically with another sister in an auto accident. At Sister Kathy's funeral, I met a friend of hers, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) of La Crosse, Wisconsin. In sharing our grief, we became friends and she invited me to become an FSPA Affiliate. Following a period of preparation, I made a covenant as an FSPA Affiliate in 1992 and remain one today.

The FSPA gatherings, retreats and meetings are held in La Crosse, which is more than four hours from my home in Kenosha. I participate as time and distance allow. Additionally, a smaller companion group of affiliates and one sister meet four times a year to share prayer, spiritual reading, and good conversations. I value these friends and the spiritual growth we have made together.

Sister Sylvia Leonardi and Associates Barbara Kluka and Margie Simmons frequently invited me to Franciscan celebrations at the St. Joseph Center motherhouse in Milwaukee. I found the community to be welcoming and hospitable. Occasionally a sister would suggest that I become an associate. It wasn't until I learned I could be a dual member, and not have to abandon my FSPA affiliation, that I knew that was what I wanted. The international dimension of the School Sisters of St. Francis interested me and I enjoyed meeting sisters from other countries and cultures.

Barbara Kluka became my contact person. With her direction, I learned about the community's origins and development, so rich in courageous and innovative challenges. The day of my Associate Relationship commitment stands out in my life. I am blessed to share the congregation's mission.

In the couple of years I have been an associate, I have learned much and grown personally by serving on committees, participating in the Mississippi mission trip, and attending many liturgies and events in Milwaukee. The community's mission and charism enrich my everyday life as I endeavor to serve family, friends and strangers with generosity and love. It has been a circuitous route, but I am at home as an associate of the School Sisters of St. Francis.