



Sister Mary John Van Atta

Sister Mary John Van Atta entered the Sisters of Saint Joseph from St. Margaret Mary parish in Rochester. She taught at St. Mary's in Elmira, St. Joseph's in Wayland and St. Agnes High School in Rochester. Sister Mary John also was the Director of Public Relations for the Congregation, pastoral assistant at Immaculate Conception in Rochester, did research and consulting for the University of Rochester's School of Nursing, spent time on the Sisters of Saint Joseph leadership team as a councilor and was the Graphic Artist for the Congregation.

On the occasion of her 60th Jubilee celebration in 2007, Sister Mary John spoke of her decision to become a Sister of Saint Joseph.

"When my brother and I were children, our mother would very often make a delicious frosted cake or cupcakes for dessert on special occasions. My brother usually ate his portion in what might be called the 'normal' way – most bites having some cake and some frosting. I, however, would cut my piece in half *horizontally* and eat the cake first, saving my favorite, the frosting, for last.

I have sometimes wondered over my 60 years in religious life if that's one of the reasons that I entered – thinking that I was 'saving the best for the last' (heaven, maybe?). I specifically remember thinking it when my best friend, Dorothy, came out to see me on her wedding day – she, radiant in her wedding gown, and I in my drab postulant outfit, probably on my way to the kitchen to peel potatoes!

But I'm happy to say that, in many ways, it's been true for both Dorothy in her happy marriage and children and grandchildren *and* for me as a Sister of Saint Joseph that life has become richer and sweeter as each year has gone by.

My life has been blessed in so many ways: living in many different communities with great, loving, intelligent, inspiring, and *fun* women; receiving wonderful, life-long educational opportunities and experiences; having the pre-Vatican II experience of Church which helps me to appreciate the new vigor that Council brought to the Church and to my faith personally; enjoying (most of the time) every one of the ministries in which I've served – teaching, communications work of various kinds, pastoral ministry, group facilitation all over this country and Canada, computer graphics; all of the children, young people, women and men whose lives have graced mine through these ministries.

So it may be that life is never all frosting, but that I needed to learn to appreciate the cake, too — and even the vegetables that we had to finish up before we could move on to that dessert!”