**Sister Leomarie Luecke - 60th Jubilee**

Sister Leomarie (Janet) Luecke, a native of Freeport, Illinois, is the youngest of eight children born to the late Marie and Leo Luecke. Her siblings, John, Frederick, Paul, Roland, Theodore, Mary Virginia Bicknell and Beatrice Schleich are all deceased. Following in the footsteps of her five brothers and two sisters, she attended St. Joseph Parish Grade School. She graduated from Aquin High School in Freeport, Illinois, and from 1955 to 197, she attended St. Mary’s College in Notre Dame, Indiana.

In September 1957 Janet made the choice to enter the Sisters of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois - these Sisters had served at her home Parish and had taught her in grade school. On September 8, 1957, she became a postulant in the Congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. On August 12, 1958, she became a novice and received the name of Sister Leomarie.

Sister Leomarie received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of St. Francis (now University of St. Francis) in Joliet, Illinois in 1961. In 1971 she received a Bachelor of Music Degree from the College of St. Francis. Her educational background continued with courses in Spanish from 1961 to 1965 and through Communidades de Base (1976), Instituto de Liturgical Hispano (1983 - 86) and participation in the Midwest Region Spanish Speaking Commission (1974 – 1985) and II & III Encuentro Nacional Hispano de Pastoral 1977 and 1985.

Sister Leomarie began her life-long ministry of education by teaching second grade at St. Mary Immaculate school in Plainfield, Illinois. Preparing the little ones for their First Communion remains a special memory for her. She continued serving as a teacher at the elementary level and as parish organist at various schools in Ohio and Illinois from 1961 – 1970. She still hears from many of her students.

God gives us many talents for personal pleasure and also for use while serving in ministry. Sister Leomarie discovered long ago that her gift of music and her gift of making others feel at home in her presence were the gifts that God was asking her to share in her ministry as a Franciscan religious. She comments: “Music has been a big part of my life. I began piano lessons at 8 years of age. In high school I learned to play Benediction hymns on the church organ. (Sister Geraldine Demes was my teacher!) Piano was my major in college. I loved studying Gregorian chant and our Sunday choir practice with Sister Raphael. In the late 60’s I started visiting the migrant camps in Plainfield and Manhattan, Illinois. We would have Mass in the fields or in the barn during the season when the people were picking onions. I would lead the singing.”

In 1971 she began her ministry in the Spanish-speaking Apostolate of the Diocese of Joliet, mainly through her ministry to the migrant workers during summers, her work in the Religious Education Program at Mount Carmel Parish and as a music consultant to other Hispanic communities. In 1973 she became a teacher of English as a Second Language at Joliet Central High School and later at the Spanish Community Center through the Adult Education Program of Joliet Township High Schools while continuing her Spanish Apostolate through the Diocese of Joliet at St. Charles Borromeo Center in Romeoville, Illinois. In 1983 she added ministry as a pastoral minister teaching religious education courses and serving as organist at Mount Carmel Parish and St. Mary Magdalene Parish. From August 1988 – June 1989 Sister Leomarie ministered with our Sisters at Convento San Damiano in the city of Goiânia, Brazil, South America.

On May 26, 1998, Sister Leomarie received a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of outstanding support given to the Adult Education Program of Joliet Township High Schools. In 2013 she received a Certificate of Recognition from Joliet Junior College for serving as a volunteer tutor in the Adult Volunteer Literacy Program.

Reflecting back on her 60 years as a Franciscan, Sister Leomarie has made it her desire to follow Christ by living the Gospel, i.e. being one with the poor and having a love and respect for all of creation. She believes that we are all united in Christ and strives to bring that unity into being through her presence.