

CSA JUBILARIAN 2016

Name of Jubilarian: Brigid Layden

Name of Birthplace/Hometown: Holland, MI/Green Bay, WI

Education: Schools/colleges/universities attended and degrees received:

Marian College – BS Elementary Education

Clarke College – MA Learning Disabilities

Please name the places where you have ministered; if possible, list years. If you were a teacher, please name the parish or school, location, dates, and grade levels taught:

St. John the Baptist, Waunakee, WI – Primary

St. Peter Claver, Sheboygan, WI – Primary

St. Mary's, Crown Point, IN – Primary and Intermediary

St. Peter and Paul, Hortonville, WI – Primary

St. John the Baptist, Waunakee, WI – Primary/Otter Creek Correctional Institution

St. Francis Home, Fond du Lac, WI

Carl D. Perkins Comprehensive Rehab. Center, Kentucky

GED/College (Community College), Kentucky

ABE/GED/ESL, Title I, Milwaukee WI

Please provide a statement of 150 to 250 words using as your focus any or all of the following:

The Gift I Have Received, I Give as a Gift

In 1966, when I entered our community as a vowed member, 2016 seemed like a million years away, and now it is a reality that arrived seemingly “in the blink of an eye.” Years ago, everything in life, as I knew it, seemed to change little from year to year; however, in hindsight now---fifty years later--- I have witnessed that there is nothing of any major importance that has not changed quite radically: the world, our atmosphere, religious life, the church, family life, problem- solving, relationships, and me, myself. One unchanged thing though is the privilege it has been to enter deeply into the minds, hearts, and lives of so many, many individuals--- in so many places--- and in so many unique circumstances--- over a long period of time as a Sister of St. Agnes.

My eyes still smile as I look back and remember all the eager young children from various schools that I loved and who loved me and trusted me to lead them in learning life skills and to grow as morally responsive, God-loving, human beings; as they'd become more skilled, they'd discover and begin to develop and share their individual gifts and personalities. **Such a responsibility...such a joy...**

Then there were the years of educating “imprisoned” Appalachian adults ---imprisoned by poverty, learned attitudes and behaviors, lack of opportunities, inadequate education, religious beliefs, seemingly unattainable goals, depression, and some unbreakable cultural belief systems. Additionally, some were actually behind prison walls, others by varying degrees of being handicapped, and still others by an ankle monitoring device. To name a few adjectives that come to mind when describing these friends, I would need to include: amazing, admirable, courageous, tenacious, creative... I had never before (without my title of Sister) walked so side-by-side with others as their “sister”---building trust, suspending judgment, loving, allowing my own vulnerability to be known and ministered to, staying open, growing, being genuine, and entering into new church and life cultures. **Such change...such growth...**

One young adult student once said to me: "You're a Christian, aren't you?" (I respond.) "You're a Catholic, aren't you?" (I respond.) "You're a sister, aren't you?" (I was pretty surprised because we didn't use the title "sister" there because they don't understand anyhow. Everyone is "brother" or "sister" in their churches. They don't know Catholics.) So, I answered her and then asked her how she knew. A frequently repeated adjective in that area is "hateful". Always unbelievable to me was that even babies are said to be "hateful"! She said she knew because I wasn't hateful; she also said that Catholics come to help everyone, not just the people from their own churches. Wow, "They'll know you are Christians by your love..." **Such insight...such amazement...**

When a friend of mine had a conversation with Louis, a freshly paroled prisoner from Otter Creek Correctional Institution where I had worked, she later related to me his answer to her query, "Who is Brigid to you?" Louis lit up and thoughtfully responded, "She's my friend. She's my mom. She's my sister. She's my Mother Teresa." These examples seem to sum up my being "SISTER". For me, it means "simple" (!) things like: BEING, being REAL, figuratively walking side-by-side with another person as their sister (with all that entails), non-judging, being/remaining open... ---exactly as Jesus has modeled for me in my own life. **Such humility...such eagerness to respond in the next fifty years...**