

# Sister Jean Ferstl, OP



Born to Earthly Life on March 7, 1941

First Profession on August 15, 1962

Entered Eternal Life on July 8, 2024

**J**EAN MARGARET FERSTL was born on March 7, 1941 to her parents Walter and Margaret. She was the oldest of the four Ferstl siblings, and they grew up on a farm, working and playing together in a prayer-filled home.

Jean and her siblings attended St. Luke's Catholic School in Plain, where she was taught by several Racine Dominican Sisters. She also had a cousin in the Community and saw the impact their work had and the prayerful way they lived. She felt the call to religious life and joined the Racine Dominicans. She made her first profession on August 15, 1962 and final vows on August 11, 1968, taking the name Sister Vincent.

S. Jean received a Bachelor's Degree from Dominican College in Racine and a Master's Degree in Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. She began her first ministry at St. Catherine's High School in Racine and taught physics, chemistry and math for nearly 20 years.

She was a caring and energetic teacher, sharing the excitement of learning with her students through creative teaching methods. So many of her former students talk about how she would stay late to help them with questions, take interest in their extra-curricular activities and would be there to help them through hard times. She had high expectations for her students and could be tough, and she was also caring, compassionate and loved to laugh and have fun in the classroom. In 1980, she was honored by the Wisconsin Society of Professional Engineers as one of the five best science teachers in Wisconsin.

Being a teacher allowed her to share her faith and love of learning with her students. S. Jean said, "young people today are searching: searching for a meaning in their lives, for a recognition of their unique individuality, for ways to respond to the issues and concerns in our society. They need someone to search with them, to walk with them, to model for them a living faith. They need to be loved and cared for as individuals. Having experienced this, providing them with the opportunity to acquire and develop basic skills, a critical sense for reflection on society and its values, as well as decision-making skills, will prepare them to carry on Christ's mission in our world today. I believe young people can and will respond to the Church's call to build a just society."

After nearly 20 years of teaching, she felt moved to go in a new direction. After a year of study in a ministry program at St. Louis University, she began her years of work in pastoral ministry. She was a Pastoral Associate at St. Rose in Racine, St. Luke/John the Baptist in Plain/Spring Green and at St. Peter Parish in Lexington, Kentucky. S. Jean did many things - formation and training of lay ministers, working with RCIA teachers, counseling parishioners, support services for a death or other family problems and visiting shut ins. She loved the work and the connection to people.

She returned home to Siena and took on more leadership roles, including House Coordinator, Vice President of the Racine Dominicans, and Director of the Racine Dominican Sponsorship Office. She also worked at the Eco-Justice Center and was an advocate for Sisters in Skilled Nursing Facilities.

S. Jean was a light for so many – her family and friends, her students, her parishioners and most of all her Sisters. Her life of service and prayer was a gift to us all. As she wrote, "Tenderly you lift up those weighed down by fear and stress, by oppression and grief; we find courage and strength in your never ending love. You have lifted me up and in your warm embrace I find courage and strength."

