Sister Ann de Lourdes Plourde, OP  
1925-2016

Sister Ann de Lourdes Plourde, baptized Laurel Ann, was born on October 19, 1925, in Detroit. She was the oldest of the five children born to Gordon and Gertrude (Stindt) Plourde. Her parents were of French and German ancestry from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Her father was a corporate attorney and her mother a school teacher before they married.

In her autobiography, Sister Ann wrote:

After they were married five of [my mother’s] sisters came one by one to work in Detroit and live in our home until they married or left again. Occasionally Grandma or Grandpa lived with us and we enjoyed the comparative luxury of having help with the dishes and having our clothes ironed beautifully. The increasing demands of a family of five children and occasionally a grandparent did not put us in what is modernly called ‘the upper bracket.’

My mother was brought up such a staunch Lutheran that she influenced my father’s leaving the Catholic Church when they were married. I was brought up in the Lutheran Church until I was about twelve, when my father decided that he would not have us brought up with such a prejudice against the Catholic Church. We children were baptized conditionally in the Catholic Church and my sister Joyce and I, and the others following later, began attending the Catholic schools.

Sister Ann met the Adrian Dominicans when she attended St. Ambrose School in Detroit and St. Mary High School in Royal Oak. During the first semester of her senior year, she met Mother Gerald and “with her gentle prompting” entered the postulate in February 2, 1943, at the age of eighteen. She began her canonical year in August 1943 and made first profession in August 1944.

During her formation year in Adrian, Sister Ann’s parents moved to San Bernardino, California for health reasons. Mother Gerald told her she would send her west. Sister Ann wrote, “She really did because I never went back to Adrian in the summer for twenty-two years. I have been in the West all my religious life except for the year and a half of Formation.”

Her first assignment was St. Ann School in Tucumcari, New Mexico, where she taught third grade for two years. Because the children spoke only Spanish at home and could not speak English when they began school they attended a pre-first grade where they were taught English. The families were very poor and lived in houses with dirt floors and no running water.

Her next assignment was St. Mary School in Kingman, Arizona, where she taught for three years. For two of those years, the Sisters lived in the school building because
there was no convent. By the third year, the pastor had to enlarge the school building because student enrollment was increasing. He built a house for the Sisters, but when it was finished, he moved into it and gave the Sisters the rectory.

From 1949 to 1954, Sister Ann was assigned to teach primary grades at St. Mary School in Delano, California, in the central valley of California. The population was composed of ranch owners and grape and cotton pickers. Sister Ann said, “The children got along well with one another, but the parents did not.” The Anglo parents attended parent/teacher meetings; the Hispanic and Black parents were too intimidated to come. Tension was building up in Sister Ann, and she wrote,

> A few months before the end of my fifth year [at St. Mary] I began to have muscle spasms, only I did not know that was what it was. I only knew that the pain was so intense that I was vomiting. It was decided that I should be taken to [Dominican Hospital] in Santa Cruz. There I was given muscle relaxers and I was kept in a peaceful atmosphere. I began to feel better, though any kind of tense situation would set me off again. The next year I was assigned to teach second grade at Holy Cross School in Santa Cruz.

After four years at Holy Cross, Sister Ann was assigned to St. Brendan School in San Francisco to teach seventh grade. She described this assignment “as a shock to my system.” She was not prepared to handle seventh grade students and their parents, who were professional people. At the end of the school year at St. Brendan, she was changed back to Santa Cruz to teach primary grades for one more year.

For the next nine years, Sister Ann’s assignments were in Las Vegas, Nevada. She was assigned to teach fourth grade at Our Lady of Las Vegas School for the next three years. Because of the growing population in the area, the bishop built a new parish a short distance from Our Lady of Las Vegas. Named St. Francis de Sales, this parish school opened in 1964 with Sister Ann as principal and superior. She and Sister Clara Budenz began the school with the first two grades. Because St. Francis de Sales Parish had no convent or school, they lived at Our Lady of Las Vegas and taught in their parish hall.

In her autobiography, Sister Ann wrote:

> I was tempted to ask to be relieved of [being principal] but I never had things worked out well enough to do it. In the last years Sister Michael Thomas was my vice principal and helped me with school things.

> When my six-year term was over I was feeling very depressed and I did not know where to go or what I could do. It was the beginning of the time when we could choose what we would like to do in consultation with our major superior. I chose

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1 After studying several summers at the University of San Francisco, Ann received her Masters Degree in Secondary Education in 1961.
to go to a school in southern New Mexico. When I got there and started to prepare my classroom, I knew I could not face teaching. They sent me to Rose de Lima Hospital for a while and when I was feeling a little better they sent me to St. Anthony School in Casa Grande, Arizona.

Sister Ann knew she could no longer handle the demands of classroom teaching and so at the end of the school year at St. Anthony, she took time for professional counseling before going to St. Raphael School in Los Angeles. Her counseling sessions continued for awhile and gradually she was able to begin the transition to a ministry of clerical services at a parish and a medical center. She wrote:

During my bus riding years in Los Angeles I had trouble with things being taken from me. The last time it happened I was pulled to the ground and my shoulder was broken. When St. Raphael convent was closed I lived with the Sisters of St. Joseph at Transfiguration Convent. It was a good experience... I lived there for five years until I decided to move to Orange County in a safer area. After spending the summer job hunting, St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton offered me a position as receptionist in the Emergency Room. I lived at the Medical Center convent with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange who owned the Center.

After working at St. Jude Medical Center for eight years, Sister Ann retired and spent a few months volunteering at St. Rose de Lima Hospital before returning to Adrian in 2000. She died on August 11, 2016, at the age of ninety-one.

During the wake/remembrance service, Sister Pat Dulka, Co-Prioress of the Holy Rosary Mission Chapter, shared the following:

When Ann returned to Adrian, she found ministry – first in the nurse’s office area for about five years, then delivering mail and watering plants. She welcomed new-comers and did whatever she could to make them feel welcome.

The following is an excerpt from Judy’s message about her sister.

I believe Ann’s compassionate nature and love of ethnic diversity came from her extensive reading, a variety of teaching experiences, and the positive influence of progressive leaders in her Dominican community. Ann’s life was not always easy, but she lived with a community of sisters who loved, trusted one another, and created opportunity to seek growth and peace through prayer, discussion, song and active participation with many children and adults in good works.

The funeral homily was delivered by Sister Mary Soher, who spoke about her experience of being mentored by Sister Ann during her time of discernment about her vocation.

I Am the Good Shepherd – this was Ann de Lourdes’ God – the Good Shepherd, the one who knows the sheep and cares for them. I met Ann in the last third of
her religious life. I met her as a quiet, gentle person who gave her entire presence to whoever was in front of her. We spent about a year sharing stories about our families, the congregation and what it means to be sister.

Ann met me and others without judgment. Early in her life, she wanted to give her life to God – to give to God the love that she had and in turn share the love she received from her God with others. For Ann, the easiest group to share her love and kindness to were children – children from all walks of life, but especially the poor.

As times changed and her responsibilities grew, Ann struggled to meet the challenges; but the one area that never wavered was her belief that her God loved her. She knew that God would indeed deliver her and all of us from where we are scattered on the days of dark clouds and that nothing will be

Through her prayer and her continuous reading, Ann continued in her God quest – to become the best servant that God was calling her to be. She shared her connection with God through her ministry of presence – she was the gentleness of God reaching out to others. Let us be open to the guidance and shepherding of our God, who invites us to rediscover the gift of being gentle with each other and with our precious world.
Left: 2013 Double Diamond Jubilarians are, seated, from left; Sisters Ann de Lourdes Plourde, Mary Scheibel, and Mary Irene Wischmeyer; and, standing, from left: Sisters Anne Wasco, Mary Jo O’Hanlon, Attracta Kelly (Prioress), Rosemary Ferguson, Elaine Lederer, and Mary Arnold Benedetto.

Right: At the beach at Carmel in 1955 are, from left: Sisters Marie Raphael Dunigan, Thomas Josephine Lawler, Joan Cecile LaCombe, and Ann de Lourdes Plourde.

Left: Sister Ann de Lourdes is surrounded by her family, from left: Jeannette, parents Gordon and Gertrude. John, Joyce, and Judith, about 1957. Right: Adrian Dominicans attending the Jubilee celebration for the Diocese of Orange, California in 1993 are, from left: Sisters Virginia McTaggart, JoAnn Fleischaker, Ann de Lourdes Plourde, Virginia Kleckner, Rina Cappellazzo, and Monica Kim.