

## **Sister Helen Elsbernd – Sister Mary Mark**

Born January 15, 1938

Joined Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration August 28, 1954

First Profession of Vows August 12, 1958 – final vows 1963

Helen Elsbernd was born on January 15, 1938 on the family farm. She is the third daughter and seventh child of Alois and Loretta (Kuennen) Elsbernd. Childhood memories include many happy days of playing with her brothers and sisters. Her early education was at St. Mary's School in Festina. At that time she had an early experience of carpooling- fourteen children from six families were driven to school together each day.

After ten years of Catholic education at St. Mary's, Helen joined the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) in La Crosse, WI where she completed her high school education as an aspirant at St. Rose High School in La Crosse. Helen was received into the novitiate of the Franciscan Sisters on August 12, 1956. She was then known as Sister Mary Mark, a name she kept until she returned to her baptismal name about 1968. She took her first vows on August 12, 1958 and her final vows 5 years later.

Helen completed her college education at Viterbo College in 1965 with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a minor in mathematics. Interspersed with her college education, she had five years of teaching: three years of seventh grade at Sacred Heart School in Eau Claire, WI and two years at St. Francis School in Provo, Utah. In 1965 she was asked to begin a graduate studies in chemistry at the University of Illinois where she received a master's degree in 1967 and a doctorate in inorganic chemistry in 1969.

Upon completion of her graduate studies, Helen joined the chemistry faculty of Viterbo College at La Crosse, WI in 1969, was named department chair the following year, and elected President of the Faculty Senate a few years later. She was then asked to accept the position of Academic Dean, which she held from 1976-1989. After twenty years at Viterbo, Helen resigned and accepted the position of Vice President of Academic affairs at Marycrest College in Davenport, Iowa. When that college became affiliated with a Japanese university several years later, it became known as Teikyo Marycrest University, with a strong emphasis on international education.

In 1994 Helen was called to serve as Vice President of the Franciscan of Perpetual Adoration, an elected leadership position she held until June 30, 2002. During this time she was the liaison with the congregation's sponsored ministries in health care at Viterbo University. Beginning in January 2003, Helen will minister as the Director of Prairewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center in Hiawatha, Iowa which was begun by the FSPA's in the 1990's.

Throughout her religious and professional life, Helen has been blessed with many opportunities and challenges, which were enriching and growth-filled. While in academia she had a Bush Summer Fellowship to study higher education administration at Harvard University. Beginning with her years at Teikyo Marycrest University and thereafter, she has had many international travel opportunities, including several trips to Japan and Italy and month's study in Germany under a Fulbright scholarship. She has served on numerous boards in the local community, including Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, and Franciscan Skemp Healthcare; as well as the Wisconsin Catholic Health Association, and the national board of Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

**Sister Rose Mary Elsbernd – Sister Almarie**

Born July 25, 1945

Joined Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration September 8, 1963

First Profession of Vows August 12, 1966 – final vows August 12, 1972

Daughter of Alois and Loretta (Kuennen) Elsbernd.

Rose Marie entered St. Rose Convent in September 1963. She was professed a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in September of 1963. On August 4, 1972 she made her life commitment of final vows as a religious sister.

Sister Rose has ministered in various positions in the states of Iowa, Oklahoma, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. She has been teacher, parish minister, campus minister, counselor, spiritual director and retreat director. She has worked within the Franciscan community in several positions of welcoming new members. Sister Rose was the director of Villa Maria Retreat Conference Center in Frontenac, Minnesota.



Dennis, Jerry, Kathy, Claire, Agnes, Anna Mae, Lawrence, Fr. Elmer Paul, Sister Rosemary, Loretta & Alois, Sister Helen, Ray