

## Why I became an Associate...

Meet our receptionist, Helen Lawson. Helen has been a long-time employee of the Joliet Franciscan Sisters. She became an Associate in 2003. Her companion Sister is Sister Marilyn Jean Franz. Following is her story:

In reflecting on the question, “Why I became an Associate,” I had much to ponder. I was working at the Motherhouse reception desk, and our co-worker and beloved Sister Mary Tikva, was one of the best models of Franciscan spirituality that one could ever meet. On several occasions, she invited me to become an Associate, but I was not yet ready to make this commitment. I had to really think about what this would entail.



*Helen's friendly voice welcomes those who call or visit the Joliet Franciscan Center.*

I was taught by the Benedictine Sisters as a child and during my High School years I worked for the Franciscan Sisters in a hospital. Although I received my foundation in faith from the Benedictines, I was impressed with the Franciscan spirituality even then.

Sr. Mary Tikva persevered with her cheerfulness and kind ways. I was impressed by the way she welcomed everyone, including me. There was not a mail carrier or delivery man she did not know on a first name basis. She always had a treat for each one and radiated her joy in seeing them and blessing them as they left.

The more I was around Sister Mary and got to know the Sisters, the more I felt the presence of Christ. The chapel was right there in the Motherhouse. Christ's presence was not only in the tabernacle, but in the building and people within it. In my heart, I felt a bonding with the Sisters; we bonded in prayer and spirituality.

I was impressed with the welcoming and openness in the spirit of Francis and Clare that was showered upon all who came to the Motherhouse. I had felt a deep devotion to St. Francis for a long time, but did not know much about St. Clare. The Sisters generously provided me with books on both as well as on the life of the foundress, Mother Alfred Moes. There was never a shortage of information from the library in the Motherhouse. A book would appear almost immediately if I would just mention the name of a particular saint to one of the Sisters!

By the time I was ready to apply for membership as an Associate, I was well indoctrinated in the life of St. Francis. How could I not want more?

As an Associate, I feel that the Holy Spirit bonds us in a special way to the Sisters of St. Francis. The unity in prayer and Spirit are present. This bonding is beyond words. I cannot express my gratitude for all that the Sisters and Associates have done for me throughout the years.

Peace and all good!

Helen Lawson