

Meet Sister Karen Elizabeth, Our Motherhouse Administrator

I learned about the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose through the Capuchin Franciscans friars in Santa Ynez where I was living. I was working for a CPA firm in Santa Barbara and doing music ministry at San Lorenzo seminar where I was the choir director for the small worshipping community at the Friary. I had moved to Santa Ynez after receiving my degree in History with an emphasis in Latin America Studies at California State University, Northridge and studying dance in the College of Fine arts at U.C.L.A.

The “seed” for my vocation was plant by Father Peter Banks, the guardian at San Lorenzo friary, who asked the question: “Have you ever considered religious life?” And the journey began.... Father Peter connected me with Sister Gloria Marie Jones, our vocation director at the time...now our Congregational Prioress.

I knew I had found a community I wished to enter when I spent time at Motherhouse. I was attracted by the praying of the Divine Office and the spirit of the Sisters who were living and ministering in the area. Sister Gloria Marie faithfully walked the journey with me. Over a period time, I met in vocation discernment groups at Flintridge Sacred Heart in Southern California and the Motherhouse in Fremont as well as spending time at both places on my own helping out and living in community to get to know the sisters. It was a mutual decision to take a leap of faith and try it out.

I entered on January 6, 1990, the Feast of Epiphany, and moved into Siena community, our house of formation. At that time we called the initial phase the postulancy. As a postulant and later a novice, I took classes in Religious Studies at Queen of the Holy Rosary College as well as formation classes in our charism and Dominican Spirituality. S. Mary Catherine Antczak was my Postulant Director and S. Diane Bridenbecker was my novice director. While the novitiate had its challenges, the blessings far outweighed them. I look back on that time with happy memories.

I made my First Profession on August 1, 1992 and Perpetual Profession on July 26, 1998. Between First Profession and Final Vows I received a Secondary Teaching Credential in Social Studies from Mount Saint Mary's in Los Angeles.

I taught junior high for eleven years and was a principal for three years before moving to the Motherhouse to become Administrator in 2006. My financial and administrative experience before entrance has really helped me in my role as Motherhouse Administrator.

Ongoing study and living the life in various communities have drawn me deeper into the love of the Congregation and the Order. My ministry, especially my experiences with the students and families in our inner city schools, has deepened my commitment to our mission of preaching the Gospel message in the spirit of St. Dominic wherever I find myself. In my current ministry at our Motherhouse, I have grown in my appreciation and admiration of the dedication of our elder sisters to our Mission, a dedication and commitment I pray to emulate with God's grace. I have truly been blessed in my vocation. It is a beautiful life!