

Sister Mary Joy Peter graduated from St. Mary's High School in O'Neill, Nebraska in 1965 and entered as a postulant in August at Marycrest Convent, Denver, Colorado. She took first vows in August of 1968 and her final vows in 1974.

While a novice, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Regis College in 1971. Then she accepted a position as a second-grade teacher at [Guardian Angels School](#) in Denver for the next five years. She also taught guitar to a small group of students after school, played guitar at student masses and offered two weeks of summer school for children needing extra help. In 1976, she moved to Minot, North Dakota to teach fourth grade at St. Leo's. From 1977 to 1980, she taught fourth grade at Little Flower School, also in Minot. This was a wonderful experience where she taught guitar as well as all the usual subjects. There were even several marriage proposals from students. While teaching there, she took night courses at Minot State College and earned a Master of Arts in Elementary Education from the University of North Dakota.

In 1980, Sister Joy was called to serve at Holy Rosary Mission in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, initially as a Middle School teacher at [Red Cloud Indian School](#). By 1984, she had earned an Administrator certificate from the University of Denver and started her three-year role as Elementary School Principal at Red Cloud. She prepared the way for a native Lakota principal to lead the school. Sister Joy also assisted with Outdoor Education camping trips with students while on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The weather and wildlife made for interesting times with up to fifty junior high kids and staff. The richness of the historical and cultural experience for six years was a truly graced time of personal growth. The acceptance and love of the people was a blessing. And how she loved them in return. It was heart breaking to leave them after six years.

In 1987, she was called to [St. Mary's Grade School](#) in O'Neill, Nebraska, initially to serve as Principal and then Local Minister. This was her home parish, and it is true, that you can never go home again. In 1989, she moved from O'Neill and took part in a four-month sabbatical of Franciscan studies at Loretto Women's College in Sylvania, Ohio. This was a wonderful time of new experiences and personal growth. At the end of that year, she moved to Omaha, Nebraska, lived with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at Duchesne High School and began spirituality and scriptural studies at Creighton University in January of 1990.

In the fall of 1990, Sr. Mary Joy, moved into an apartment near the school where she accepted the job as Principal at [Holy Name Grade School](#) in Omaha, Nebraska. This was a preschool to 8th grade, inner-city school with a wonderful staff, located in a culturally diverse neighborhood. While serving as principal, Sister Mary Joy had also earned a

Master of Art in Theology by 1996, including certificates in Retreat and Spiritual Direction from Creighton University. From 1995 through 1999, she also served on the Provincial Council, travelling to Denver each month for council meetings.

In 1996, Sister Joy moved to Denver to serve as VP of Mission Effectiveness for Marycrest Health System until 1998 when the sisters divested themselves of the health system. Her job consisted of regular visitations to the hospitals and nursing homes to ensure the mission of the Sisters of St. Francis was being implemented. This included giving workshops and attending all board meetings. After the closure of the health system, she shifted to serve as Director of Marycrest Retreat and Conference Center, located within Marycrest Convent. During this time, she gave weekend retreats, workshops and offered spiritual direction to many day and overnight guests. In 2003, Sister Joy also was appointed as Administrator of Marycrest convent/campus and served there through 2006. She served a second time on the Provincial Council from 2003 to 2007. The Retreat and Conference Center was closed at the end of 2006 and the remaining sisters moved out of the convent to other living arrangements. Sale of the property was begun, and the building was cleared and closed in 2007.

After a well-earned sabbatical, Sister Joy joined the administrative staff of [Holy Family School](#) in 2008 where she faithfully welcomed and monitored the safety of all at the school until retiring from there in 2017. This was a wonderful time of enjoying the students and parents in a whole new way from teaching.

Sister Joy has also served as Regional Minister of the Guadalupe Community from 2012 to 2021, and currently serves as a Spiritual Director and does various writing projects for the province.

She has enjoyed reading and writing since first grade. Her mom said she had a thing for books all her life. For several years, she also enjoyed hiking and climbing in the mountains and even led hikes to the top of a mountain or two. Now, she enjoys walking and communing with the trees and birds on the trails where she lives. However, there is nothing for comfort that beats staying at home with a good book, an iced coffee, and a comfortable chair.

