

# Nancy Lee Smith

Sister Nancy Lee Smith seemed to grow up in “two” families. She and her older brother, sister and parents were members of the Christian Church in Webster Groves, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis. When she was eight, all five became Roman Catholic whereupon seven new brothers and sisters were added, making Nancy the oldest, no longer the youngest. The enlarged family moved to a new home in Kirkwood where they lived a mile from the Redemptorist Minor Seminary.

Her mother was multitalented and began teaching Nancy at 12 to sew with a pattern, to cook, to do Japanese flower arranging and many other skills. Voice and music were important in her home, with voice lessons for her sister and piano lessons for herself, while her mother studied voice, millinery and tailoring. Her father, a salesman, had a gift in drawing and inspired Nancy.

Nancy attended Sacred Heart Academy City House in St. Louis, offering college prep academics and sports. She was athletic, playing three varsities: softball, basketball and the field hockey goalie. After graduating, she majored in art at Webster College and studied theology with Sister Ann Patrick Ware.

On Dec. 7, 1957, Nancy felt her call to religious life in front of the icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help.



Shortly thereafter, she was interviewed by Mother Anna Marie at Saint Gerard Majella Parish where the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters had just begun teaching grade school.

During her first 10 years in Michigan, completing her bachelor’s degree in both English and theology, she continued to request to study art. Finally, she began a Bachelor of Fine Arts in metal sculpture at Wayne State University. She later became certified by

the Jesuits as a director of the Spiritual Exercises. She also completed a Master of Divinity degree at St. John Seminary, Plymouth, Mich. Later, she was certified in Clinical Pastoral Education for Hospital and then advanced chaplaincy in Hospice.



Nancy began teaching fifth grade at St. Mary, Monroe; then St. Joseph, Dexter; St. Philip, Battle Creek; and Holy Redeemer, Detroit. Moving to junior high she taught at St. Thomas Aquinas, Detroit; and St. Michael, Monroe. She taught high school in Detroit at All Saints and at Immaculata, as head of the Art Department. She moved into House of Prayer ministry, then retreat ministry at St. Paul of the Cross. She

studied voice for a year on scholarship. She continues to give spiritual direction and retreats to the present day. Pastoral ministry took Nancy to Florida, Arizona, Iowa and Virginia.

Nancy discovered a gift for languages when she worked with the Polish people at Our Lady Help of Christians and studied Polish. This aided her in later travel to Europe, researching the lives of saints whose icons she wrote.



Twenty-five years ago, Nancy opened Saint Joseph Studio ([www.saintjosephstudio.com](http://www.saintjosephstudio.com)), where she teaches others and completes icons installed in foreign countries and domestic states. “Depicting God as Beauty and fascinating others with God’s Beauty, gives joy and fills me

with gratitude.”