

Sister Madelyn Gould's Book is a Gift of Love from Her Parishioners

By Sister Ruth Hoerig, Social Media Content Developer

Sister Madelyn Gould's 38 years of service at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Naperville, Illinois, have blossomed into a long-lasting memory of many blessings.



As Director of Adult Faith Formation, Sister Madelyn had numerous opportunities to share her spirituality, especially her love of scripture. Her extraordinary ability to apply the Word of God through personal stories and reflections of her own faith journey endeared her

to many people. It is no surprise that people in the parish felt a keen sense of loss when she announced her plans to retire in June 2021.

When parishioners Rita Grasser and John Nepywoda heard the announcement of Sister Madelyn's retirement, their first thought was to preserve the wonderful reflections she has shared over the years.

"Sister's reflections helped me come to know what Vatican II was all about," Rita said. "Her extraordinary ability to share God's Word on a very personal level was a great help to me."

John wanted to bind the collection of reflections into a book for publication. When he approached Sister Madelyn about this idea, she asked, "Are you sure you want to do this?" She was amazed that people would go through such great lengths to preserve her work.

"I kept copies of these reflections in a file, so it wasn't that much trouble for me," Sister Madelyn said. "I simply handed the files over to John and Rita and they took it from there. They were overwhelmed with the large collection of reflections that had been stored up over the years."

"We found copies of reflections as far back as 1985," John said. "The hardest part of putting this book together was deciding what to include in it. In the end, we selected 67 reflections for publication."

“John asked me to create a title, cover design and forward for the book,” said Sister Madelyn. “I immediately thought of the title ‘Heart Speaks to Heart,’ which I’ve kept in the back of my mind for a long time, thinking it would be an attractive title if ever I would need one.” Two School Sisters of St. Francis agreed to prepare the forward and cover design.

As they sorted through the collection, Rita and John found that some were digitized, some were typed on paper, and many had handwritten notes in the margins. They converted the paper copies to digital documents, then organized the reflections sequentially according to the liturgical calendar.

Scripture Focus

“The themes I chose for reflections were inspired mainly by scripture,” Sister Madelyn said. “I use scripture readings from the Mass of the day as it applies to our lives.

“Retreat reflections are determined by the themes selected for the retreat. For example, a retreat planned for January and February 2020 focused on the blessings of the pandemic: commitment, simplicity, prayer, creativity,” she continued.

Reflecting on her creative process, Sister Madelyn said she found she “works best at night – when the evening settles into a quiet, contemplative mood. I had a method that worked well for me: First I would establish the key idea: What is the message I want to convey? I would then select a story or current event that helped illustrate the message. After that I would go through a three-step process: human experience, message, and response. Take a human experience (like a vacation), relate the experience to the message (of the scripture), then give examples of how the reader can respond (imaginary practice).”

John and Rita contacted Amazon and learned about Kindle Direct Publishing, which allows you to self-publish your own paperback book. This print-on-demand service equips them to reach millions of readers worldwide through the Kindle store at no cost to them, eliminating the need to preorder a large number of copies.

“All we had to do is follow proper size, formatting, and design directives given by Amazon,” Rita said. “John created a Word document to fit into a 6 x 9 manuscript. Once the manuscript was completed and submitted to Amazon, it received their stamp of approval - their “ready for publication” insignia. In less than two days, the book was posted on Amazon and ready for printing on demand.”

A deal was worked out with Amazon to sell the book for \$15, with approximately 70 percent of the purchase price going to the School Sisters of St. Francis.

John and Mary wanted to have the book published in time for Advent reading and Christmas gift-giving. Flyers went out in the parish bulletin in mid-November: “This

year give yourself and your loved ones reflections on faith that will inspire, challenge, enlighten and offer you joy! Deepen your faith as Sister Madelyn shares personal stories and reflections of her faith journey with an empathetic and honest voice.” You may order your copy from Amazon here:

<https://amzn.to/3omffTu>

What does the new author plan to do after June 30, 2021? “I plan to stay in Naperville for a while to be with the people,” she said. “A new pastor will be arriving in June so that would be a good time for me to move on.”