

Sr.M.Frances Receives Education Award, CA, USA



Sister Mary Frances Wahl recently received the Excellence in Catechetical Service Award for the San Pedro Region (one of five pastoral regions in the (Los Angeles Archdiocese, California). The award is given to a handful of religious educators who are nominated by their colleagues each year. Sister traveled to Lakewood, California with a group of friends to accept her award from Bishop Oscar Solis, the auxiliary bishop of the San Pedro Region.

Religious educators, or catechists, volunteer their time teaching the tenets of the Catholic faith to students from first grade through high school and into adulthood. As a master catechist, Sister Mary Frances guides other religious educators through a forty-hour training process. Supporting other teachers is an important part of her work.

“I really have a heart for the volunteers who have full time jobs. They’re moms and dads and they’re giving up hours to come and teach kids and they deserve a lot of credit and support for that,” she said.

Sister Mary Frances knows how demanding the job of a religious educator can be. She began her career teaching religious education to second graders at Saint Columba Catholic Church in San Diego when she was still in high school. She soon realized that many of the catechists in her home parish didn’t have sufficient background, so she started developing a training program for them..

“It’s so much fun to go on youth and confirmation retreats. The kids start out thinking ‘I dare you to do anything with me,’ but then you see them blossom and get excited about getting to know God. Even the most stubborn ones begin to feel the Spirit working around them,” she said.

Her students are often curious about her life as a Sister of Notre Dame. They ask her how she could give up marriage and family life in favor of consecration.

“I’m really honest with them,” she said, “There are always sacrifices no matter what call you’re answering: marriage, single life or consecrated life. The kids need to see a variety of vocations and how they work together for the beauty of the Church.”