

**International Forgiveness Institute  
Founding Board Member Profile**

## Sister Mary Ellen Lewis, FSM



Mary Ellen Lewis was born in Clayton, St. Louis County, Missouri, in 1934. She entered the Catholic order of the Sisters of Mary, now known as Franciscan Sisters of Mary (FSM) in 1955 and received her Formation Education for Life as an FSM from 1955-1958.

After earning her nursing diploma (RN) from St. Louis City Hospital School of Nursing in 1955, Sister Mary Ellen received a bachelor's degree in nursing from St. Louis University in 1962. She completed her Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1969 and a Master's in Theology in 1990 from the Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis.

Sr. Mary Ellen's long history of professional service during her 67-years as a Franciscan Sister of Mary includes:

- **1958-1966** – Staff nursing, supervision, and instruction at both St. Mary's Hospital, St. Louis, MO, and St. Mary's Hospital, Kansas City, MO.
- **1967-1977** – Hospital Administration at St. Mary's Hospital, Madison, WI, and St. Mary's Hospital, Jefferson City, MO.
- **1977-1986** – Councilor/Governing Board member of Franciscan Sisters of Mary and sponsored hospitals.
- **1986-1991** – President Franciscan Sisters of Mary and sponsored hospitals.
- **1992** – FSM Director of Religious Formation.
- **1993** – Sabbatical.
- **1994-2010** – Chaplain and Director of Pastoral Care, St. Mary's Hospital, Madison, WI.
- **2010 – Present** – Retirement service to FSM, The Sarah Community, Independent Living, Bridgeton, MO.

During her career, Sr. Mary Ellen was an active member of Sigma Theta Tau (the International Honor Society of Nursing); the Nursing Honorary Society; and a designated Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives. She received the Madison (WI) Catholic Charities Leadership Award in 2010.

After learning about Dr. Robert Enright's forgiveness research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1993, Sr. Mary Ellen eagerly joined his "Friday Forgiveness Forum" when she moved to Madison in 1994. That group developed the concept for a forgiveness entity totally separate from the university and Sr. Mary Ellen not only helped draft the by-laws and articles of incorporation for the International Forgiveness Institute (IFI) but became one of its original founding board members.

In addition to serving as the IFI's Treasurer for its first 16-years, Sr. Mary Ellen personally led fund raising initiatives that included donations from FSM and others for IFI Forgiveness Education programs in Northern Ireland, Liberia, and Israel/Palestine. She remains involved with IFI efforts in a variety of capacities.