

We of Nojoshing

Nojoshing – Indian word for the area where our pioneer members settled in 1849; it means "piece of land stretching into the water."
The name was changed later to Saint Francis, Wisconsin.



Newsletter of The New Assisi Archives of the
SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, Saint Francis, WI 53235-3799

We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Canise (Anna) Kolbeck March 27, 1930 – February 25, 2025

Sister Canise, who was baptized Anna, was born in Kohler, Wis., one of three daughters of Joseph and Marie (Gruber) Kolbeck. Her parents were natives of Austria. She knew of our Sisters through catechism classes they taught at the public school in Kohler that she attended. Anna graduated from Kohler High School in 1948 and worked at Montgomery Ward and the Kohler Company as a tabulating clerk prior to entering our congregation on January 24, 1951. When Anna became a novice in August of that year, she received the name Sister Mary Canise.

Sister Canise taught 7th grade at St. Sebastian School, Milwaukee, and grades 2-3 at St. Joseph School, Grafton, Wis., while she was a second-year novice. She professed vows in 1953 and continued at Grafton for two more years. Then she taught grades 5-6 for a year in Parkston, S.D.

In 1956, Sister Canise made a transition to sewing and sacristy work at our Motherhouse until 1961 when she was transferred to St. Mary's Academy, where she worked in the office for five years.

In 1966, Sister Canise began a 49-year tenure at Cardinal Stritch University as an assistant to the business officer and facilities coordinator. In 1977, she was named director of grounds and security. She was also coordinator of the steno pool. Later, she was in charge of the steno pool, transportation, and telephones at Stritch.

During her time there, she witnessed the growth of Cardinal Stritch. She knew every inch of the property and shared her many talents among various departments. She was there for the introduction of computers and the addition of an IBM computer main frame, among other milestones. As she recalled for a collection of stories that the university published in 1998, she was around when the switchboard consisted of a cardboard with two outside trunks and 15 pairs of cords. When she left some 40 years later, the college had a new telephone system and fiber connecting the entire campus. There were 650 telephone extensions!

In addition to her many responsibilities at Cardinal Stritch University, Sister Canise took on the work of key contributor to the production of a photo directory of Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi that became a vital reference tool and archival record for the congregation. In 1998, the “Photo Album” was printed in binder form and included a photo for each Sister and Associate alive at the time, along with information about her family, ministries, and interests. Sister Canise entered the text and screened each photo into the computer. Along with several other Sisters, and with help from the Cardinal Stritch University steno pool staff, the binder was completed in July 1998. Sister Canise kept it current up until her retirement in 2015, adding information about new members. In 2001, when the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore merged with The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Sister Canise added each one of them into the book as well. It was a labor of love, and a significant contribution to the history of the congregation.

During her time at Cardinal Stritch University, she was honored for outstanding service to the college as a member of the professional staff.

In 2000, Sister Canise was honored at the Italian Community Center for attaining 175 points for donating blood and platelets. The donors were given framed prints of drawings that the children from Children’s Hospital had done. The children are very often the recipients of the blood and wanted to show their thanks. She said, “*It is a great feeling to be able to give something so precious where it really counts.*”

Among her many talents, Sister Canise liked to sing and create art for various occasions. She was a member of the Bel Canto Chorus for many years as well as the Allegro and Plymouth Chorales.

Her artistic talent was on display many times over the years, including for her 50th Jubilee, when she designed the artwork for the celebration. For the 150th anniversary celebration of the congregation, she prepared a community word puzzle booklet that served as an activity during the gatherings for the event. Her energy and creativity knew no bounds.

For her 60th Jubilee in 2013, Sister Canise reflected on her life as a member of The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi:

Sixty years is very hard to come up with a brief reflection. Thank God I had the help to make the right choice to come up with the religious life. There are many Franciscans who helped me along the way.

Sister Canise retired from active ministry in April 2015 when she moved to Clare Hall. In May 2019, she was one of the first residents of the new St. Francis Convent with a ministry of prayer and presence.

She died peacefully at St. Francis Convent. Sister Mary Hau was with her at the time of her death.

*†Sister Marie Colette Roy, OSF
and Marian Doyle, Communications Director
The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi*