

# 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.



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## **We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Catherine (Rosemary) Morrissey March 19, 1926 – June 14, 2024**

Sister Catherine was born on March 19, 1926, to James and Eva Mary (Gagnon) Morrissey in Hibbing, Minn., and was baptized Rosemary. She had an older brother and two younger sisters, one of whom was Sister Timothy (Laura) (†2006).

Like other families in Hibbing, the family worked hard, enjoying the rich natural resources around them, being helpful neighbors and loyal parishioners. When Rosemary was 12 years old, her mother died, and it fell to her father to fill the void in his children's lives. They joined him in many activities. Most of the household responsibilities fell to Rosemary.

After high school, an ad she found about the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore attracted her because of their work with African-American orphans. Her father gave her permission to apply; and on September 8, 1945, after a long train ride, she entered the convent in Baltimore. Three years later, after her first profession and now known as Sister Catherine, her teaching career began.

From 1948 to 1970, with the exception of 1950 to 1960 when she was a house mother at St. Elizabeth Home in Baltimore, Md., Sister Catherine's teaching assignments took her to Richmond, Va.; Daphne, Ala.; Long Island, Yonkers, and New York City, N.Y. At the same time, she was a part-time student and earned a B.S. degree in secondary education from Fordham University in 1964 and a M.A. degree in education with a minor in special education in 1974 from Loyola College in Baltimore.

Sister Catherine found her niche in teaching at St. Elizabeth School for special education in Baltimore until her retirement in 2018. There she helped students prepare for living as independently as possible after they left school at age 21. Her classes included values, social skills, money management, how to live in a society that is not always accepting of persons with special needs, and other skills. When

Sister Catherine wasn't in the classroom, she was "on the court," coaching basketball! She also coached girls volleyball. One year, she traveled with a team to Minnesota for a national championship game. To this day, some of the girls who were on that team, who are women now, still speak of that trip and Sister Catherine.

Sister Catherine's coaching ability extended to directing the Nativity play each year. She collected old clothing for costumes and guided the students to play their parts well.

Faculty and staff who worked with Sister Catherine remember her with great love. They experienced her as a steady and important presence. She had a remarkable way with the students. Debbie Boyce, who worked with Sister Catherine wrote: "It was always evident that the students saw that she was real with them, that she respected them, and that she was kind to them. It should be noted that those lovely qualities should not be mistaken for her being a pushover. Sister Catherine demanded excellence and respect."

Looking over her long life, Sister Catherine served in many capacities besides teacher and house mother, which was most often in combination with her primary position. These included principal, local superior, and formation director.

How did Sister Catherine come to be called Sister Katie? As she related the story, at one point there were four Sister Catherine's living at St. Elizabeth Convent. To help reduce the confusion of who was being called on the intercom, she adopted "Katie" as a solution to help clarify which Catherine was wanted.

When the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore merged with The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in Milwaukee, Wis., in 2001, Sister Catherine was much closer to Minnesota and family. There were no more long train rides like her initial trip to Baltimore. In 2018 she moved to Wisconsin and found enjoyment in retirement.

In the last year, Sister Catherine's health took its ups and downs. In the last weeks of February, when she showed signs of decline, she was anointed by Father Tom Suriano, and Sisters began to hold a vigil with her. However, her condition stabilized until early June. She was called to enter the fullness of everlasting life at 7:40 p.m. on Friday, June 14. She was in hospice at Franciscan Shore (St. Francis Convent), and Sisters began sitting with her on June 13. Sister Mary Hau was with her when she died peacefully.

Sister Catherine lived her dedication, "Of the Holy Cross," and was given the grace she desired as expressed in her motto, "Take up thy cross and follow Me."

*~ Sister Marcia Lunz, OSF*