

# 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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SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, Saint Francis, WI 53235-3799

## **We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Margaret Gardner (formerly Sister Mary David of the Stigmata) January 27, 1921 – January 24, 2025**

Sister Margaret was born in Lubec, Maine, to Howard and Teresa Gardner (Sullivan), the second of four children. She entered the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore on February 1, 1941, and professed final vows on September 20, 1946.

Over her many years of service, Sister Margaret spent 35 years as an elementary school teacher and principal, beginning at Resurrection School in New York (1943-44) through her teaching ministry at St. Elizabeth School in Richmond, Va., (1976-80). During those years she also taught in North Carolina and Maryland. From 1949-59, she was a house parent to boys at St. Elizabeth Home in Baltimore.

Sister Margaret was a compassionate teacher who valued the dignity of all students, regardless of their backgrounds or special needs. Sister Margaret was a staunch defender of the rights of all individuals and a champion for the underserved. Throughout her years of ministry, she taught in the African American community, ministered to boys who had multiple handicaps, and served in multi-ethnic parishes. Many of her students fondly remember her for her no-nonsense approach, and caring heart.

After her years in education, Sister Margaret served as a pastoral associate at Sacred Heart Church in Danville, Va., from 1980-92. After that she was the assistant to the local coordinator at St. Elizabeth Convent in Baltimore and became local coordinator following the tragic death of Sister MaryAnn Glinka.

Sister Margaret held a bachelor's degree from Mount St. Agnes, Baltimore, and a master's degree in special education from Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore.

She retired in 1999 and volunteered at Resurrection House in Washington, DC, until 2003, when she moved to Clare Court in Baltimore. She joined the community in Saint Francis, Wis., in 2017, and died peacefully at St. Francis Convent, where she resided.

Up until the weeks before her death, Sister Margaret was high-spirited with a keen wit. She was admired by all those privileged to have known her and by those who cared for her in her final years. She shared many stories with Sisters and staff that revealed her unyielding dedication to justice and her zeal for doing the right thing.

One such recollection was shared by Sister Margaret during a celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in 2023. Though she was over 100 years old at the time, she vividly recalled a day in 1968 after the assassination of Dr. King.

In her inimitable way, she recalled, “I was principal at a school in Harlem, New York. We didn’t know whether to send the children to school or whether (they should) stay at home and learn about all that was happening. We decided to let the children come to school.

“The weekend after Dr. Martin Luther King was killed, we quickly organized a parade...and we made a march from 151<sup>st</sup> Street in Harlem to Central Park where groups were gathering. We sang ‘We Shall Overcome’ all the way and picked up groups of people as we went along, trying to keep everyone as calm as possible.”

The story spoke volumes about Sister Margaret’s Franciscan heart and the richness of her life experiences.

For her 80<sup>th</sup> Jubilee in 2021, Sister Margaret wrote:

“My life as a Franciscan Sister has been many things, early prompting by the Holy Spirit as a 12-year-old at Confirmation. Prayer did not become pleasant without effort, guidance of Holy Spirit, help from directors, and perseverance. Over the years, I believe and trust that ‘just do it’ has paid off and I am more comfortable as a lover of Francis and Clare and many more great saints I learned about.

“I spent 35 years as an elementary teacher and loved it. There were ups and downs, successes and not too many failures, as happens to anyone striving to guide young souls along pathways to truth, love, and goodness. ... As I pressed the bell at 2226 Maryland Avenue on February 1, 1941, I said: ‘Just do it,’ and I did 80 years ago, all the while trying to live the Franciscan calling of my motto DEUS MEUS ET OMNIA, My God and My All!”

*~ Marian Doyle, Director of Communications  
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi*