

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

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

We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Ruth Marie Soens July 9, 1937 — October 3, 2025

Sister Ruth Marie (who was baptized Dolores) was born to William and Mary (Gratz) Soens in Kenosha, Wis. She had two sisters and three brothers, but one sister died at age five. Young Dolores was attracted to The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi through her relationship with her cousin and godmother, our former Sister Janice (Marian) Gratz. She also knew of our congregation through her father, who was taught and cared for by our Sisters at St. Aemilian's Orphanage. Dolores entered our congregation in 1955. When she became a novice the following August, she requested and received the name of her deceased sister, Ruth Marie. She professed vows in 1958.

Sister Ruth Marie served in several ministries over her lifetime. She taught first grade for 21 years at St. Sebastian, St. Gerard, and St. Veronica schools in Milwaukee; at St. Mary, South Milwaukee; Sacred Heart in St. Francis, Wis.; St. Patrick in Mauston, Wis., and St. Gertrude in Franklin Park, Ill. During those years, she earned her bachelor's degree in education and history from Cardinal Stritch University.

In 1978, she began 25 years of service at St. Coletta of Wisconsin, where she was a group parent, driver, switchboard attendant, assistant librarian, and AV coordinator.

Following a sabbatical after she retired from active ministry in 2003, Sister Ruth Marie moved to Milwaukee and volunteered in the congregation's New Assisi Archives and library at St. Francis Convent. She loved history and especially enjoyed the years she spent in the archives, where she catalogued volumes of papers and kept track of precious artifacts of the congregation's history.

For the celebration of her 60th Jubilee of profession in 2018, she wrote: “I thank God for all the wonderful years ministering in His vineyard with so many memorable coworkers. I treasure my memories and my living at Clare Hall. A rich experience; I’ve gotten to know so many in my congregation.”

Sister Ruth Marie enjoyed reading, playing cards, needlework, watching videos, decorating, writing, and driving. She was inspired by the beauty in nature and by music. She valued time spent on retreat and always looked forward to community and family gatherings.

On October 3, 2025, at the age of 88, Sister Ruth Marie was called to enter the fullness of everlasting life. She had been in hospice at Franciscan Shore/St. Francis Convent as her health began to fail, but a vigil had not yet begun. When Sister Ruth Mary Costello checked on her at 4:45 a.m., she discovered that Sister Ruth Marie was not breathing. The hospice nurse declared her death at 5:39 a.m.

Survivors include Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi with whom she shared life for 69 years; sister-in-law Joan Soens; and nieces. Following a Memorial Mass at St. Francis Convent, Sister Ruth Marie was buried in the Soens family plot in St. George Cemetery, Kenosha, Wis.

~ *Marie Colette Roy, OSF*
Marian Doyle