

# 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 St. Francis, Wisconsin.



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## **We celebrate the memory of our beloved Sister Justine (Mary Johanna) Peter July 23, 1924 – May 25, 2020**

Sister Justine, who was baptized Mary, was born in Longmont, Colo., to Arnold (a native of Switzerland) and Matilda (Burkey) Peter. She had five brothers and two sisters. Her brother, Vincent, was ordained a priest and her sister, Sr. Marie Gerard (†2007), entered our community. Sr. Margaret Peter (†2014), a cousin from South Dakota, was a classmate of Sister Justine’s. Our sisters taught Mary at St. John the Baptist Elementary School in Longmont. She attended Longmont High School for three years before joining our community on August 30, 1940. When she became a novice on August 11, 1941, she received the name Sister Mary Justine.

In 1943, she professed vows and began her teaching ministry that fall. She taught primary grades at St. Sebastian, Milwaukee, until 1948 and then was transferred to Middleton, Wis., where she taught intermediate grades for three years while completing her bachelor’s degree from Cardinal Stritch University. Her next mission was Our Lady of Solace in Chicago, Ill. While teaching there, she began work on a master’s degree in history at Loyola University. Completion of her master’s degree and the beginning of her long tenure at Cardinal Stritch University occurred in 1954–1955. The following year she began full-time doctoral studies at Loyola. Her next year was spent in England as a Fulbright scholar, and then she returned to studies at Loyola, completing her Ph.D. in history in 1959.

Sister Justine became a full-time faculty member at Stritch in 1959 and taught history for five years before becoming academic dean in 1964, a position she held until 1975 while continuing to teach part time. In January of 1974, she led a three-week *Studitour* from Stritch to England.

In 1975, she returned to full-time teaching and became the alumni coordinator in 1978. During the 1982–1983 academic year, she coordinated corporate and foundation contacts for the Alumni office. In 2011, Sister Justine retired from teaching at Stritch after 57 years. As a board member of the Alumni Association and a volunteer in the Alumni Office, she maintained her connection with Stritch until her health no longer permitted an active role.

As a professor of history, her reputation was legendary. Students talked about a “Sister Justine test.” A true/false response required a defense of your choice. Multiple-choice questions were structured with single letter or combinations of letters to choose, so guessing was not very helpful. The senior seminar class research topics demanded rigorous research, which would yield solid historical content. She looked for topics that were stimulating and would pique the students’ curiosity to motivate rigorous research of the subject. Students learned that the study of history was by no means just a dull, monotonous memorization of dates.

Sister Justine was recognized as a scholar and teacher. In 1978, she received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to study “Religion and Politics” at Rutgers University during the summer. In 1987, she was the first recipient of the St. Francis Award at Cardinal Stritch University and received the 1992 *Stritch Teaching Excellence and Campus Leadership Award*. In 2003, our congregation submitted her name to the Franciscan Federation as a Franciscan reconciler for her work in Restorative Justice, and she received the award at the Federation’s National Assembly in August that year. In 2006, she received a grant from the NEH to attend a Franciscan Study Program for two weeks at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury, England. The Mother Bartholomew, OSF, Lifetime Achievement Award from the Cardinal Stritch University Alumni Association was awarded to her in 2016.

Another talent of Sister Justine was the knack for setting new words to familiar melodies. Whenever there was an occasion for the sisters to celebrate, Sister Justine’s resourcefulness could be relied upon to help create a skit or presentation that included songs ‘repurposed’ for the event.

Sister Justine wrote that the only hesitation she had had about entering religious life was the day she arrived at the convent. She wondered to herself what she was doing and decided to call her mother to arrange returning home. However, her brothers had teased her that she wouldn’t last two weeks, so she decided to at least stay overnight. When she woke the next morning, she knew she had made the right decision which is reflected at the time of her 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee in 2013: *“I have been very blessed in my life as a Franciscan sister. God’s faithfulness and the loving friendships inside and outside of the congregation have given me the courage and inspiration to live this life. I thank God for all the blessings I have received.”* In 2018, Sister Justine celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> jubilee of profession.

In the last few weeks, Sister Justine showed signs of failing health. On May 20, she suffered a massive stroke and sisters began sitting with her when she returned from the hospital the following day. Sisters Diana De Bruin, Ellen Carr and Kathryn Dean Strandell prayed with Sister Justine during a *Transitus Service of Anointing for a Dying Sister*. Sisters Ruth Mary Costello, Rita Kosednar and a nurse were present when God peacefully called Sister Justine home on May 25.

We pray with Sister Justine, our sister and teacher, who always called us to think more broadly and deeply.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – God’s good, pleasing and perfect will.”* Romans 12:2

~ †Marie Colette Roy, OSF, and Marcia Lunz, OSF