

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

## **We Celebrate the Memory of our beloved Sister Leander (Mary/Ching Guee) Liu December 27, 1916 – January 8, 2021**

Mary/Ching Guee Liu was born in Ti-yang, Shantung, China, the daughter of Joseph and Mary (Wang) Liu. She had one younger brother. Their father died young and their grandparents lived with them. Mary's mother didn't want her to enter the convent, although Sister Esther Minch (†1979) encouraged her. On October 4, 1940, when she was 23 years old, Mary joined our congregation. At her reception as a novice on August 11, 1942, she received the name Sister Mary Leander. In 1944, after Profession of Vows, her first assignment was at Our Lady of Angels in Tsinanfu, China, doing domestic work.

Sister Leander was among the 21 Chinese who came to Milwaukee in November 1948 after the Communists expelled the American sisters. The Chinese sisters had to choose whether to come to the United States and remain a member of the congregation or return to their families. "We thought we'd be gone about four years and then come back to China," she recalled. During her first two years in the States, she studied English and helped with domestic work. From 1950 to 1962, she ministered in the nursery and did domestic work at St. Joseph Orphanage in Superior, Wis. She then continued doing domestic work at St. Ann Health Center for two years and at Alverno Cottage in Jefferson, Wis., for four years. From 1968-1974, she was a nurse's aide at St. Coletta of Wisconsin, Jefferson.

Sister Leander studied at Cardinal Stritch University for a year to gain background in working with persons with mental disabilities before leaving for Taiwan in 1975, where she became a teacher's assistant at Liteh Kindergarten. In 1976 until 1980, Sister Leander worked as an assistant to Sr. Julian Alderson (†1982) at St. Raphael Opportunity Center in Tainan, Taiwan. To make her daily commute easier, Sister Leander learned to ride a bicycle so that the distance to the bus stop could be done faster than walking. When she returned to the States, bike riding was a favorite exercise for her.

In 1980, Sister Leander came back to the States for a six-month visit, which ended up lasting two years, and during that time, she was the sacristan at St. Coletta of Wisconsin. In 1982, she returned to Taiwan and supervised boarders at Kuang Jen Middle School on one of the three floors in the dormitory. Sister Leander retired to St. Francis Convent in July 1983.

In retirement Sister Leander helped out in the dining room, laundry and cleaning. Her artistic talents were nurtured through Chinese brush painting classes at Cardinal Stritch University. In her free time, Sister Leander turned to her hobbies, which included knitting, art, bike riding, and card playing. She learned to make crocheted angels, which she gave away as gifts. Her individually handcrafted greeting cards were works of love with an original Chinese brush painting on the cover of each. Even at 100 years plus, it took a lot to beat Sister Leandra in math games. She also won a lot of Bingo games but shared her prizes with other sisters. She found inspiration in music, prayer, holy hours, and meditation.

After leaving China, Sister Leander had no news about her family for many years. Gradually, she would learn that her family's property had been confiscated by the government and that her mother had died several years before. When diplomatic relations opened between China and the United States, the sisters who had left China began to return to visit their families. Sister Leander would make six visits between 1985 and 2003.

At the time of her Golden Jubilee of profession in 1994, Sister Leander reflected, "My life as a religious woman has been very happy. I am grateful to God for the many ways in which he has blest me and for having called me to serve him in religious life." She celebrated 75 years of profession in 2019.

The gift of a long life was granted to Sister Leander. In 2016 she celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, and each year following, until her 104<sup>th</sup> celebration, the day was marked with a special Chinese dinner prepared by Carlina Marlowe, a CNA on the nursing staff. She relished those meals and presided at the table with the grace of a diplomat.

If there was a constant force in Sister Leander's life, it was prayer. She wrote how much she liked to pray with others. Until the move to the new St. Francis Convent, she spent time in the adoration chapel each day. Her slow but steady steps with her walker from the third floor to the chapel were a pilgrimage for her.

Sister Leander stayed independent as long as she could. She wanted to do things for herself but was very polite to the caregivers when that was no longer possible. She usually expressed her gratitude to the staff by putting her hands together, bowing and saying "thank you." The staff loved her and never received a complaint from Sister Leander. The one thing they will truly miss is when she sang in Chinese, especially the Christmas carols.

Sister's health began to decline more rapidly in the last months of 2020. At age 104, Sister Leander was called to enter the fullness of everlasting life at 6:00 a.m. on Friday, January 8, 2021. Twice in the past month, Sisters Diana De Bruin, Ellen Carr, and Kathryn Dean Strandell prayed the *Transitus Service of Anointing for a Dying Sister* with her. After praying with her again on Monday, January 4, a vigil began and sisters took turns sitting with her. Sr. Ruth Mary Costello was present when Sister Leander died peacefully.

Sister Leander was exiled from the homeland of her birth. In death she has a homeland with God.

*"I sing a hymn of thanksgiving, proclaiming all your wonders. O God, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory makes its home." Ps 26: 7-8*

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