

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.



Newsletter of The New Assisi Archives of the
SISTERS of ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI, 3221 South Lake Drive, St. Francis, WI 53235-3799

We celebrate the memory of our beloved
Sister Margaret Ruddy
formerly Sister Mary Sebastian
December 1, 1936 – December 29, 2021

Sister Margaret was born in Streator, Ill., to Harold and Eurita (Ritchie) Ruddy. She was a niece of our Sister Benedicta Ritchie (†2004). Margaret entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi on September 8, 1954. When she became a novice in 1955, she received the name Sister Mary Sebastian. After Vatican Council II, she resumed her baptismal name.

As a second-year novice, Sister Margaret began her ministry as a practical nurse at the Congregation's former St. Ann Health Center. She professed vows in 1957 and remained at St. Ann for another year and then was transferred to St. Coletta, Jefferson, in 1958 to assist with nursing needs of the residents. In 1959 she returned to St. Ann Health Center to serve in practical nursing and crafts work with patients and, from 1965-1978, as an occupational therapist.

Sister Margaret furthered her education at Cardinal Stritch University with studies in biology and at Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, where in 1965 she received a bachelor's degree in biology, with an emphasis in occupational therapy.

In 1979, Sister Margaret made a transition to higher education as a librarian at Cardinal Stritch University while earning a master's degree in library science in 1980 at UW-Milwaukee. She served as coordinator of public services in the Stritch library from 1992-2008 and then as Stritch's archivist from January 2009 until taking medical leave in May of 2021. In 2019 she was honored for 40 years of service to Stritch, and the archives were newly named *Sister Margaret Ruddy, OSF Archives*.

Sister Margaret's ministry always kept her occupied, but she found time to pursue other interests. Her artistic skill was very evident in the greeting cards she fashioned. Her skill in crocheting kept her very busy, making gifts as well as items for sale in our gift shop and the Christmas boutique. The Franciscan Center in Baltimore was a recipient of her handiwork for distribution to those in need.

Years ago she became interested in the work several Sisters pursued in processing canceled stamps to build collections and to prepare for sale to dealers. These funds went to helping our missionary work in China until the Congregation was forced to leave, and then was used for needs in the congregation. Sister Margaret worked with Sister Mira Stephani (†1987) and Sister Veronica Scheurell (†1994) and faithfully carried on their work until shortly before her death.

Many people sent canceled stamps to Sister Margaret, which she acknowledged with a personal note. She also helped some donors in times of loss and difficulty by extending a listening ear and accompanying them with prayer.

It was evident at times that Sister Margaret had a formidable side to her personality. While this could be intimidating, it was this side of her that made her successful as a librarian and archivist. There is a right place for books, documents, records and artifacts when tracking is essential. The work of cataloguing, sorting, organizing, filing, shelving, and retrieving all benefited from her precise approach. There was also Sister Margaret's side of appreciating and promoting beauty. She enjoyed God's creation in nature and nurtured it through gardening. She especially enjoyed care of the birds and kept abreast of all their needs each season. In her creative endeavors, her sense of beauty was evident. Her smile was inviting and she had a quiet sense of humor.

At the time of her Golden Jubilee in 2007, her sense of gratitude shows in the reflection she wrote:

I am continually in awe that I was chosen to live my life as a religious. The saying of the words "50 years" seems to be such a long time, but the living of those 50 years have gone by so fast.

In the course of these 50 years, there have been so many changes in the Church and society. The changes have not been without some pain as we saw numbers of the community leave. God has been so good in providing the blessings and love to continue. May these blessings continue.

And the blessings did continue as reflected at the time of her 60th Jubilee of Profession in 2017:

Living 60 years as a vowed religious has been the greatest gift of my life. God has been so generous in His gifts. I thank and bless Him every day of my life.

Sister Margaret was called by God to enter the fullness of everlasting life at 7:15 a.m. Wednesday, December 29, 2021. Sisters and associates began keeping vigil in prayer on December 28, when Sister Margaret moved into hospice and comfort care at Columbia St. Mary's Hospital. Sister Charlotte Roost was present when Sister Margaret died peacefully.

During her last few weeks, Margaret was very peace-filled and needed no distractions except to prepare for meeting her Creator. Earthly things had no significance. She truly was living the passage, "Take nothing for your journey." Margaret loved her family and community dearly. A few days before she died, she said, "God must love me very much as I am surrounded by so many people that love me."

St. Joseph was a daily companion of Sister Margaret. May he and all the saints of heaven embrace and welcome her home.

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