



Sister Aletta Dorothy Donahue, OSF



Sister Aletta Dorothy Donahue, OSF, (formerly Sister Charles Francis), died in Assisi House on June 11. Born in Trenton, New Jersey, Dorothy entered the congregation in 1946 and professed her first vows in 1949. She ministered primarily in education, sharing her giftedness as a teacher in the Dioceses of Wilmington, Baltimore, Trenton, and Washington, DC. In more recent years, Dorothy moved to Assisi House where she served in prayer and hospitality ministry. Like most “born” teachers, Dorothy thoroughly enjoyed her years in the classroom. Her expertise was recognized outside the classroom as well, earning her several awards—the Outstanding Catholic Educator Award from the Diocese of Trenton and the Catholic Educator of the Year Award from the Knights of Columbus.

Both in her educational encounters and in her relationship with the sisters with whom she lived, Dorothy was viewed as a compassionate woman with a listening ear and an open heart. That same compassion extended to children beyond the classroom. In later years one sister recalled Dorothy’s interest in helping out at a local childcare center. Not a driver, Dorothy walked to and from the center where she volunteered her services—“going over and above what a person of her age might normally do.” Another sister, who met Dorothy for the first time at Assisi House, described her as “a woman of deep faith who exuded a sense of calm.”

Dorothy’s readiness to help extended beyond the margins of the classroom—and even beyond those of the congregation. At the time of her diamond jubilee last year, Dorothy wrote about her hopes for our world and our Earth. “I have a great appreciation for our Earth and am interested in stopping pollution and working to care for all creation,” she explained. “I’m also interested in working for effective ways to resolve conflict and to arrive at solutions for the common good. Both of these interests and efforts, I believe, are avenues of sharing our Franciscan charism!”

Poet John O’Donohue once wrote, “Beyond your image, below your words, above your thoughts, the silence of another world waits.” Dorothy, in your quiet but supportive manner of relating to others, your ongoing influence on future generations, and your prayerful way of living, you have lifted us with gentle glimpses into this “other world.” Rejoice now in the world of the loving God who gifted us with your presence in our lives.

