



Sister Mary Ann Potenza, OSF *Professed 1953*

"A single sunbeam is enough to drive away many shadows."

St. Francis of Assisi



Sister Mary Ann Potenza (formerly Sister Mary Nicholas) was truly a sunbeam warming the lives she touched through her lively spirit, love, and caring. Sister Mary Ann entered the eternal loving embrace of God on January 7, 2022. She had been a professed member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia for 69 years.

Sister Mary Ann grew up in Philadelphia's St. Thomas Aquinas Parish with her sisters, Genevieve and Virginia, and her brother, Louis. She was a graduate of Hallahan High School and earned her bachelor's degree in English and education from Mount St. Mary's University. Sister Mary Ann then went on to minister as a teacher for elementary and middle-grade students in schools in Baltimore; Wilmington, Delaware; Media and Lansdale, Pennsylvania; and Philadelphia, where she also taught computer science and honors mathematics.

Using her classroom experience, her Franciscan charism, and her innate caring and warmth, she guided both students and teachers during her 17 years as a principal for three Pennsylvania diocesan schools: Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Allentown, St. Bonaventure in Philadelphia, and St. Ignatius in Yardley. Later, before beginning her prayer and hospitality ministry in Assisi House, she ministered for 20 years in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, with the St. Mary Medical Center No One Dies Alone program, in which trained volunteers sit with patients when family members cannot be present with them. Sister Patricia Helen Warman recalls, "Sister Mary Ann was deeply loved and respected by patients, visitors, and staff. Often she would bring a smile to a patient by bringing them a warm blanket and a tender word."

Sister Pat shares that following Sister Mary Ann's medical-center ministry, "In her 'retirement' at Assisi House, she reached out to the sisters who needed assistance with eating and brought her loving, caring way to them too. She was always a welcoming presence in the convent. No doubt, Sister Mary Ann is looking down on all the people she loved in this life and continuing to intercede for their needs."

Writing about her earliest years as a sister of St. Francis, Sister Mary Ann recalled, "I was not too happy going to normal school early in my time as a postulant. I just wanted to pray and clean. I loved the Glen, chapel, cleaning, and singing. But when I went to St. Elizabeth in Baltimore and taught second grade—we had three sections of each grade—I loved the children. Changing to another school, Shrine of the Little Flower, taught me to be ready to give to my community. When changes came, I was ready. This was my life, to give and help where and when my God called for me to be sister."

Asked to reflect on her gifts, Sister Mary Ann wrote, "I'm a good listener. This is my way of greeting my sisters: a smile; a wave of the hand; saying, 'How are you today—how can I assist you?' or maybe saying, 'I can write that birthday card—I have an extra.'" She also cheered other sisters and friends by giving greeting cards she had made herself and decorated with hand-drawn flowers.

Sister Mary Ann expressed her own gratitude: "I am grateful to the sisters of my community for what we share as sister to sister and for our past and present days together." In the same way, all who have known Sister Mary Ann Potenza are profoundly thankful for her life and the sunshine she shared with such love and generosity.

Private services, with livestreaming available, will be held at Assisi House on Thursday, January 13, 2022.

A Christian Wake Service will be held at 9:30 A.M. Mass of Christian Burial will follow at 11 A.M., with burial in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.

