

Sister Joan Ann Koliss, OSF

Professed 1963

"May we joyfully witness to our faith." Pope Francis



Sister Joan Ann Koliss, OSF, passed away on July 12, 2022. Throughout her 59 years as a professed Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, she joyfully witnessed to her Franciscan charism and faith. Sister Joan entered the congregation in 1960 and shared her wisdom, generous spirit, and kindness with all she met, every day and in each of her many ministries.

Joan Ann Koliss was born in East Orange, New Jersey. She and her parents, Evelyn and Peter, and her brothers, Thomas and Michael, later moved to Maryland, where she graduated from Towson Catholic High School and was a member of Towson's Immaculate Conception Parish. Her bachelor's degree in English was from Neumann University. She went on to earn master's degrees in religious studies and spirituality from St. Michael's College and Creighton University, respectively, and received certification in spiritual direction.

Sister Joan began her ministry with the Sisters of St. Francis by teaching in the Diocese of Trenton at Immaculate Conception School. Then, in Pennsylvania, she taught at York's St. Mary School before returning to New Jersey to teach in both Trenton and Egg Harbor and to serve as an associate pastor in St. Mary Parish in Colts Neck. Beginning in 1986, in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Sister Joan coordinated Neumann University's Institute for the Study of Psychology and Spirituality and began her service on the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia General Council.

During her years in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., Sister Joan ministered in social service and family life at the Crossway Community in Kensington, served in the social policy department of Catholic Charities, and worked with Washington's Wider Opportunities for Women, which helps women to achieve economic independence and equality. Among her contributions, she wrote for such publications as *Commonweal* and *Charities USA* to urge Social Security reforms ensuring the system's viability for everyone's well-being.

Sister Joan's ministry in the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, included directing Nashua's Corpus Christi Food Bank and Assistance Program—part of a social-service collaborative dedicated to helping in areas of need ranging from food and housing to medical care. For this work, she earned the 2006 Granite State Award from the Knights of Columbus. Once again serving in the Mid-Atlantic region, she ministered with Friendship House and as a caregiver in the Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware, and volunteered for the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia's Red Hill Farm. Beginning in 2019, Sister Joan served in prayer and hospitality ministry in Assisi House, where she was living at the time of her death.

Reflecting on her life as a Sister of St. Francis and on her own gifts, Sister Joan shared, "I have lived life fully, loved fully, and spent my energies helping to change systems so they might serve the common good, especially for women. I am a seeker, a questioner, a lover, and a woman of integrity committed to serving the underserved. I desire to build peace among my brothers and sisters. I am a learner, a collaborator, and an instigator. I am fun loving, stubborn, and a lover of nature. I particularly love the ocean." Sister Joan likewise especially found pleasure in music, gardening, swimming, reading, painting, and gathering and working with friends.

News of Sister Joan's passing has brought an outpouring of loving appreciation. Sister Kathleen Gannon speaks of her dear friend as amazing and truly special. Sister Ann David Strohminger remembers Sister Joan as "a wonderful religious leader and person." Margaret Lilley, Red Hill Farm's manager, writes, "I love Joan and have wonderful memories of working with her at the farm." Another admirer remembers her as "so funny and a great teacher," and yet another recalls that Sister Joan always had "a smile, a kind word, and laughter that was contagious."

All who have had the blessing of knowing Sister Joan Ann Koliss treasure her memory in their hearts and the joyful gift of her example in their lives.

All services will be held at Assisi House on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

Viewing will begin at 9:30 A.M., followed by Mass of Christian Burial at 11 A.M. The services will be livestreamed.

Burial will be in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.