



## *Sister Anita Cattafesta, OSF* *Professed 1955*



*"To live with the Spirit of God is . . . becoming love."  
From the poem "To Live with the Spirit," by Jessica Powers*



**A**fter a spirit-filled life of giving love, kindness, and joy, Sister Anita Cattafesta (formerly Sister Rita) passed away at Assisi House on October 6, 2022. She had been a professed member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia for 67 years.

Sister Anita grew up in South Philadelphia, where she and her parents—Jean and William—and her five siblings were members of Saint Monica Parish. Speaking of her loving family's lifelong influence, she reflected, "My love for people, I believe, comes from my Italian family roots. I have always been grateful for this gift of care for others and hope that my love for God's people resonates with all who know me."

Sister Anita graduated from John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School and then attended Peirce College, where she learned the secretarial skills she used in business settings before entering the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in August 1952. As a sister of St. Francis, Sister Anita took courses in sociology at Seton Hall University and then earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from Villanova University. She later earned both a Master of Science in educational administration from Penn State and a Master of Theological Studies from the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, California.

Sister Anita's ministries spanned school and seminary education and both congregational and healthcare administration. Her first teaching ministry was in the Diocese of Trenton, where she directed the choir and taught several grades at Trenton's Holy Angels School and Lincroft's Saint Leo the Great School. Later she taught and served as principal at St. Joseph School, Dallastown, Pennsylvania, in the Diocese of Harrisburg. For five years beginning in 1988, Sister Anita taught at Mpima-St. Augustine's Major Seminary, in Kabwe, Zambia.

A skilled administrator as well as a gifted teacher, Sister Anita ministered as an assistant superintendent for the Diocese of Trenton, as coordinator of education for St. Anthony Province, and as vice president for mission and ministry at Trenton's St. Francis Medical Center. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, she ministered at the motherhouse as a member of the general council, as director of sponsorship, and in local house ministry. During her 14 years at Neumann University, she held extensive administrative responsibilities. At the time of her death, she was serving in prayer and hospitality ministry in Assisi House.

Reflecting on her life as a sister of St. Francis, Sister Anita wrote, "Being a Franciscan enables me to be true to God's call to me. It is the core essence of my life, giving me a growing relationship with my God and all the people God sends into my life. The tradition and spirit of St. Francis add special warmth, love, and peace to my every day. I feel blessed each day God gives me to serve Him as a Franciscan religious. . . . Best of all are the women in our congregation who accompany me." Asked to consider how others saw her, she acknowledged, "I know I am dependable, cooperative, and sincere in my desire to be true to my calling. People are special to me and I enjoy being with others, wanting to add to their lives whatever ways I can." In addition to her love for those with and for whom she served, Sister Anita loved life itself. Among life's pleasures she especially savored were needlecrafts, good books, operas, movies, and cooking and baking.

Sister Anita nurtured hope and love in those she served and all who knew her. One friend shares that she was "such a sweet soul." Another adds, "She was so very kind." Sister Mary Lonergan, who lived with Sister Anita while they were both ministering in Zambia, describes Sister Anita's calm manner and notable organizational skills, unfailingly used for the comfort and harmony of others. "She was an absolutely amazing person to listen to," a person of "real compassion and empathy," explains Sister Mary. She adds that Sister Anita's focus was always directed toward others' needs, toward what she could do to help, never toward herself. All those with the immeasurable blessing of having known Sister Anita Cattafesta thank God for her—for her beautiful, loving spirit, her goodness, and the limitless caring, wisdom, and kindness that she shared.

*All services will be held at Assisi House on Monday, October 17, 2022, and will be livestreamed.  
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.*

