



## *Sister Joan Cooper, OSF Professed 1951*

*“May you continue to inspire us: To enter each day with a generous heart.  
To serve the call of courage and love until we see your beautiful face again...”*

John O’Donohue



Sister Joan Elizabeth Cooper, OSF (formerly Sister St. Catherine), 94, died in Assisi House on Saturday, March 18, 2023. Joan was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Francis and Elizabeth—one of six children in the family. The Cooper family were members of St. Francis de Sales Parish and Joan, a graduate from West Catholic High School. After a few years of bookkeeping work, she entered the congregation in 1948 and professed her first vows in 1951. Sister Joan spent all but two of her 71 years as a sister within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Spending over 40 years in education ministry—teaching at the elementary, high school, and college levels—Sister Joan began her ministry in the Archdiocese of Baltimore where she taught for one year at Immaculate Conception School in Towson. She then returned to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia where she taught elementary school at Resurrection of Our Lord in Chester and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Morton. In her reflection for her 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee, Sister Joan spoke fondly of her time at Resurrection calling it a “linchpin experience” and shared, “That time grounded me in an appreciation of community, prayer, collaboration, and responsibility.” She then taught high school English at Lansdale Catholic and St. Hubert’s in Philadelphia. While at St. Hubert’s, she also worked as studies director. Sister Joan then spent 11 years in higher education at Neumann University, first as an instructor and then as registrar. Many who knew her as an educator consider her to be a dedicated educator and a deeply spiritual person.

However, after many years in education ministry, Sister Joan switched focus and used her many gifts to serve in a variety of ministries in and around Aston. These ministries included hospitality at St. Clare Renewal Center, human resources secretary at Our Lady of Angels Convent, office assistant for the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation, and local house minister at Visitation Convent. Sister Joan also spent seven years as a volunteer at Drexel-Neumann Academy in Chester. She also spent one year in hospitality at Regina Ministry Center in Hyattsville, Maryland, in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

Joan was an avid reader and music lover. She enjoyed community life, especially spending time with her sisters. Sister Betty Kirk, her dear friend of 59 years, shared, “Joan gave love, support, and compassion to others, especially those who were struggling. She was a woman of deep faith who was willing to serve wherever she was called.” Sister Clare Andrew D’Auria said of Joan, “She trusted God’s providential care for her from childhood and that unwavering faith and trust led her to our congregation. I was blessed to have her accompany me as a wise mentor and am so deeply grateful to have known her as my loving and faithful friend for 54 years. She loved without measure.”

In reflecting on her life in the congregation, Sister Joan wrote, “I am grateful and proud to belong to this congregation. I am also humbled to be among the number of women who have steadfastly kept faith in their God and have sought to serve His people in a multitude of ways with compassion and generosity.” Sister Joan, your generous and compassionate heart was an inspiration to all who knew and loved you. May you rest now in God’s deep love for you for all eternity.

*All services will be held in Assisi House on Monday, March 27, 2023. 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 follow in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.*

