



# Sister Justina Marie Miller, OSF

*Professed 1949*

*"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." Pablo Picasso*



Sister Justina Marie Miller, OSF, passed away on Thursday, April 6, 2023. Throughout her 74 years as a professed Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, she lovingly witnessed to her Franciscan charism and faith. Sister Justina entered the congregation in 1947 and professed her first vows in 1949. She shared her wisdom, generous spirit, and Franciscan joy with all she met in her education ministry and her life in community.

Marie Elizabeth Miller was born in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. She and her parents, Charles and Carrie, three brothers and five sisters, attended St. Gertrude Parish in Lebanon. Sister Justina had fond memories of her elementary school years at St. Gertrude's and the sisters who taught her. She once wrote, "My teachers were an inspiration and I wanted to be just like them! I was impressed with their simplicity, prayerfulness, love, and spirit." After entering the congregation at the age of 16, she went on to earn a BA in elementary education from Villanova University and a master's in elementary education and supervision from The Catholic University of America.

Justina entered the congregation with her friend from high school, Sister Helen Ann Gaidos. "When they came," Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer remembers, "Our postulant director was upset and said, 'They sent me babies to take care of,' but those two 'babies' were two of the greatest sisters you would ever want to meet." Sister Corda went on to say they had a saying, "Know what good comes from Lebanon? Miller and Gaidos!"

Sister Justina began her ministry with the Sisters of St. Francis in education in the Archdiocese of Harrisburg, teaching in York at St. Mary School for one year, and St. Joseph School for 14 years. She left St. Joseph's for a year to teach in Trenton at Immaculate Conception School, and then returned to St. Joseph as the principal. After six years as principal in York, Sister Justina went back to the Diocese of Trenton where she ministered as a principal for 32 years, first at Corpus Christi School in Willingboro and then at St. Mary of the Lakes School in Medford. In 1999, parishioners at St. Mary of the Lakes donated \$100,000 to the school building fund in Sister Justina's honor and dedicated the new media center in her name. Then in 2002, the Diocese of Trenton named Sister Justina as an Outstanding Catholic Educator. After 22 years as principal at St. Mary of the Lakes, Sister Justina took a sabbatical year and then spent a year in the Diocese of Spokane volunteering at St. Joseph Family Center in Spokane, Washington. Sister Justina fondly recalled her years of ministry and wrote, "I loved being a sister, a teacher, and principal. I have worked with very supportive and caring teachers, grateful parents, and above all, wonderful students."

When Sister Justina moved to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, she knew that her heart was in teaching and she found the perfect volunteer ministry serving as a tutor for Neumann University's Academic Resource Center (ARC). In an article about this ministry for *Community News*, Sister Justina shared, "Learning about the students' background, their struggles to achieve an education, and their dreams of a successful career are great incentives for me to continue in this ministry." She tutored at ARC for 13 years until 2018 when she began serving in prayer and hospitality ministry in Assisi House, where she was living at the time of her death. In her free time Sister Justina enjoyed reading mystery books and cooking and baking when she was able.

Reflecting on her life as a Sister of St. Francis, Sister Justina shared, "My life as a Franciscan has been a very happy one. Sisterhood and community are very important to me and through the years, I've been fortunate to have lived with many beautiful sisters." Sister Corda remembers her friend as "a delightful individual and great friend. I will cherish our friendship forever." Sister Eleanor Horneman was also in the noviate with Sister Justina and remembers, "One time she played some type of trick with a watermelon, we got a kick out of it, but the sister in charge was not all that happy about it. Justina was a fun, outgoing, and sociable person." Sister Justina certainly found her gift as a sister and shared that gift with all who were fortunate enough to have known her.

*All services will be held at Assisi House on Wednesday, April 12, 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 be in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.*

