

Sister Margaret Annina Confoy



To her large extended family, Sister Margaret Annina Confoy is a beloved aunt who unfailingly supports and affirms the special gifts of each family member in the growing generations of nieces and nephews. As a Sister of Charity, Sister Margaret has shared these same qualities with countless others whose lives have been touched by her faith and her generous spirit. By listening, laughing, and offering small acts of kindness, Sister Margaret continues to uplift those around her and live a life of joyous and abundant charity.

Sister Margaret Annina began life as Rose Elizabeth Confoy. Known to her family as Betsy, she was the third of five surviving children in a devout Catholic family in Trenton, New Jersey. The family faithfully attended Sunday Mass and gathered together in the living room every night after supper to kneel and pray the rosary. Sister Margaret attended St. John's School, where she was taught by the Sisters of Charity, and then went on to high school at St. Mary's Cathedral School.

Sister Margaret says, "From second grade on, I knew I was going to be a nun. My sister knew she was going to get married and have a big family. And we were both right!"

Sister Margaret was only sixteen years old when, in 1946, she applied to enter the Sisters of Charity. She remembers, "Mother Elenita told me to go home and grow up first, but when I told her that I had already finished high school, she said I would be permitted to enter."

Though the youngest in her entering band of 33, Sister Margaret readily adapted to religious life. She laughs now when she recounts a memorable incident from her time as a novice. Recovering from tonsillitis and on heavy doses of medication, she was mortified to discover that she had fallen asleep in the middle of the day and missed a required class. "I decided to go directly to Sister Rose Miriam," the Novice Mistress who had the reputation for being stern and no-nonsense. "I really thought I would get put out of the Sisters of Charity, but instead, she said, 'You must have been really tired, dear,' and she told me to sit outside and get fresh air. To this day, no one can believe that Sister Rose Miriam really said that to me!"

After only a few months in the novitiate, Sister Margaret was sent out to begin her ministry as a teacher. This journey of more than 60 years in education took her to Catholic schools in New Jersey and Florida and culminated with 25 years teaching children in the Virgin Islands. At each of these locations, she was actively involved in her parish, serving as a Eucharistic Minister and always teaching religious education.

During most of her years as a teacher, Sister Margaret taught children in the primary grades. She was energized and moved by the children's enthusiasm for learning. "I loved to see the change and the surprise when they could recognize words, or realize what something meant in math. When they got it, they were so happy, and they would want to help the other children get it, too. They'd say, 'I'll help them, Sister!' and you could really see how much it meant to them."

Sister Margaret loved her students and remembers them with warmth and humor. She chuckles at the amusing stories collected from so many years of working with children. For example, she vividly remembers Patty, the little girl who stayed at the front of the stage singing during a school play when the rest of the class moved back for the closing curtain. "Patty's mother called out from her seat, 'Patty, move back!' and Patty shouted back to the audience, 'Mother, keep still. I'm in a play!'"

Sister Margaret also says that she'll never forget Paul, a third grader who played hooky for three days. Upon returning to school, Paul calmly presented a note obviously written in his own hand. Sister Margaret laughs when she recalls, "The note said, 'Sister: I broke my arm and I could not come to school' and it was signed, 'Paul's Mother.' I said to him, 'Why were **you** absent if your mother broke her arm?'"

Wherever she taught, Sister Margaret was keenly attuned to the needs of the children and willing to go the extra mile to help them succeed. In the Virgin Islands, she recognized the critical need for an after school program and she was determined to do something about it. "I was only there a year or two when I realized that the after school situation was terrible. The children had no place to go and they were on the streets." Sister Margaret provided a safe, structured environment where the children could do homework, enjoy a snack, and play until parents came to pick them up. She was touched when many years later, a boy who was one of the first participants in the program sent her a note saying, "Thank you for taking care of me in the after school program. I had a good time!"

At the age of 81, Sister Margaret retired from teaching in 2010 and moved back from the Virgin Islands to the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse in New Jersey. She was an active volunteer in the Motherhouse until a hospital stay required her to move to Saint Anne Villa for rehabilitation in 2013. Although she planned to move back to the Motherhouse following her recovery, her doctor recommended that she remain in Saint Anne Villa as a resident in Assisted Living. With only a momentary hesitation, she agreed that she would stay on at the Villa, where she continues to live a very full and active life today.

Sister Margaret says, "I love living at Saint Anne Villa. It's beautiful here and there's always something to do." Among her many activities, Sister Margaret volunteers as a weekend receptionist at the front desk. She also helps to deliver mail and instituted a phone tree to relay important messages that are given over the loudspeaker but that might not be heard by every sister. For seven consecutive days every other week, Sister Margaret and a sister who partners with her say the rosary for morning broadcast to the sisters in residence. She attends daily Mass, joins in retreats, participates in an eco-spirituality group, and attends almost all the parties and special events held at the Villa during the day.

As much as Sister Margaret contributes to the Saint Anne Villa community through her volunteer service and participation in programs, she may contribute even more through the way that she listens, cares, and gives thoughtful gifts to the many people she encounters each day. At least once a month, she bakes cookies for the nurses, and everyone looks forward to the jellied cinnamon rolls that she makes from refrigerated biscuit dough. Sister Margaret always seems to be crocheting something for someone: baby blankets in pink and blue for the nurse expecting twins, another baby blanket for the young woman who does laundry, an afghan for a young employee who is going off to college. "I'm glad that people like homemade things, and I like to be busy. I wouldn't want to just sit around and watch TV!"

Sister Margaret says that although she has gone through rough times, her faith has sustained her. Prayer, both in community and in private, has always been a pillar of her life. "I say a lot of prayers – I think that God must be tired of hearing from me!" Sister Margaret's faith gives her hope in times of loss, and she has no doubt that the sisters who come to the end of their faith journeys on earth are now with God. She says with confidence, "Yes, we miss a sister who dies, but we know she's with God. Isn't that what we pray for all our lives? Isn't that what we're living for all our lives?"

Sister Margaret finds joy in her vocation and in her daily interaction with so many good people as she continues the work that God has entrusted to her. She says, "God gave Mother Xavier a job to do, and He gave all of us our own jobs to do as we follow in her steps." She is content to know that the future is in God's hands. "What else can you do? Who else can you call on?" Sister Margaret will continue to call on God in prayer and place her trust in Him as she shares His love with so many others.