



Sister Anna Mary Anesi, CSJ

July 26, 1934 - October 2, 2021

Anna Mary Anesi was born in Chicago, Illinois, into a family with a strong Italian-American heritage. Her mother, Mary Catherine Avi, had come from Tressillo, a small Austrian village in the Alps which didn't become part of Italy until 1918. Her father, John Baptist Anesi, was born in Central City, Colorado. Anna Mary, familiarly known as Anna Mae, had one brother, Richard, younger by seven years. The family was very close, and Anna Mae eagerly learned from her mother how to cook and keep house. In later years, she became renowned for her wonderful yeast bread and soda bread which were popular gifts to the sisters, her friends and doctors.

Anna Mae attended first and second grade at Precious Blood School in Chicago before the Anesi family moved to California, settling in the town of Sepulveda in the San Fernando Valley. She was enrolled in St. Ferdinand School in San Fernando, and then in St. Ferdinand High School, both staffed by the Sisters of Divine Providence. In 1952, the year Anna Mae graduated from high school, the Providence Sisters were recalled to their motherhouse in Texas, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet assumed the administration of both schools.

Several of her favorite Divine Providence sisters were influential in her attraction to religious life. Anna Mae wanted to enter after high school, but "my mother told me to get my education first and wait until I was twenty." So she did. She enrolled as a freshman at Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio, Texas, provided with a tuition scholarship since she had been valedictorian of her class at St. Ferdinand's.

She returned for her sophomore year, this time accompanied by Carol Ann Crowe, her good friend through all those years at St. Ferdinand elementary and high schools. She loved to reminisce about the good times they had together, including Sunday rides by limousine to the local military base to teach catechism to the children.

After her patient wait, at last the time came. "On the day after I turned twenty, I went to St. Ferdinand Convent and asked Sister Robert, who came to the door, what do I do to be a Sister of St. Joseph?"

Things moved rapidly after that. Anna Mae entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 15, 1954, at St. Mary's Academy on Slauson and Crenshaw. She joined 41 other young women entering that day, including her dear

friend Carol Crowe. On March 19, 1955, Anna Mae received the religious habit and the name Sister John Miriam. Two years later, on March 19th, she made her first vows in the chapel of Mount St. Mary's College.

She made her final vows on August 6, 1962 in the new chapel of the House of Studies adjoining the college campus. A few years later, she returned to her former name as Sister Anna Mary.

Anna Mary loved teaching primary grade children. Her first mission was with fourth graders at St. Thomas the Apostle in San Francisco. She went on to teach in six more schools—Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Joseph's in Kennewick for a year, followed by another year across the river at St. Patrick's in Pasco. After that, back to California to St. James and Ascension Schools. After eleven years of teaching, Anna Mary was back at St. James as librarian and tutor. Then a major change from schools to Daniel Freeman Hospital in the medical records department.

She loved her years in Freeman's Our Lady of Grace Community. Her work in Medical Records wasn't enough to keep her busy. She excelled in finding lost things, restoring discarded and broken objects to full usage, and tracking down doctors who may have forgotten to complete their necessary paperwork. She was famous for that!

In 1998, she responded to the needs of her family. While remaining a member of Our Lady of Grace Community, she lived at home as loving caregiver to her mother until her death in 2006. Then Anna Mary came back to her other home,

Daniel Freeman, until the sisters moved out of the convent in November, 2007. Then came her move to Carondelet Center.

Living at the Center brought out the full range of her creative gifts. When there was something to be done, Anna Mary was always there. Moving quietly and behind the scenes, she saw the little and big things that needed attention. If she wasn't doing the chapel laundry, she was mending a piece of clothing for a sister, or for one of the veterans at CalVet. If she saw a towel ready to be discarded, she worked on it, added a bit of lace, and returned it to full use.

She loved living in St. Joseph's Community, welcomed guests, and enjoyed making bread and treats in the kitchen next door. Quietly and gently, she went about her daily duties with a smile and greeting for everyone. As her health began to fail and her walk slowed, when she was asked how she was doing, her response was always "One day at a time."

Fatigued by the three times a week routine of dialysis, Anna was not very thrilled about the move to St. John of God in July of this year. She said what has to be just has to be and agreed to go. She was grateful for the attention and care she experienced there and when her condition worsened she quietly surrendered her life to the God who had been so faithful to her.

Sister Karen Wilhelmy, her friend and member of her reception, wrote about Anna Mary: "It is not necessary to be important, or to do important things...or to gain special notice for some particular action....she has lived a life of

simplicity and generosity, not expecting accolades for what she does. Yet for each ministry in which she engaged, Anna Mary reached deep to give the finest touch and spirit of dedication.”

May her generous and loving soul rest in peace.

~ Sisters Frances Baker and Mary Williams