Sister Anne Marie Snyder, OP  
1923-2017

Sister Anne Marie Snyder was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on February 25, 1923. She was one of nine children born to Frank and Mary (Sadar) Snyder.

Sister Anne’s father was born in Slovenia, in Yugoslavia. When he was an infant, his mother died and he was brought to the United States by his godmother. Sister Anne’s mother was born in Cleveland and had three sisters. Her oldest sister entered our Congregation and was known as Sister Regina Clare Sadar. Her younger sister entered the St. Joseph Sisters in Euclid, Ohio, and was known as Sister Ann Joseph.

In her autobiography, Sister Anne shared more details about her parents.

I was born into a happy, religious, Slovenian family [that] consisted of six boys and three girls. One [brother] died at the age of three months. My other brother [James] died at the age of three following a relapse of pneumonia. Since James was next to me in age, his death affected me deeply. Even at the age of four, I mourned his death and had to be comforted by my parents.

My father proudly told us about the further education he received from our Sisters Pauline [Baske] and Ignatius [Miller], and a few other sisters in the convent in the evenings because he had to work after finishing 8th grade. My mother was apprenticed as a dressmaker and later as a milliner. [Though] her work was seasonal, she was able, along with my father’s wages, to send us all to Catholic high schools. We older ones found jobs after school to help pay the tuition.

After graduating from Ursuline Academy, Sister Anne entered the postulate on June 15, 1940, and during the reception ceremony in January 1941, she received her religious name, Sister John Vianney. Following profession on January 8, 1942, Sister Anne received her first teaching assignment. She was sent to Chicago to teach at St. Carthage until June.

During that six-month period, Sister Anne began to experience arthritic pain that traveled from one joint to the other until she found it very difficult to even walk. The medical attention she received provided only temporary relief. At first it appeared to be related to an abscessed tooth. But when the tooth was removed, her condition did not change.

She was sent to Mt. St. Mary Academy for the summer to take classes but found walking from one building to another very difficult. By August 1942, instead of returning to St. Carthage, Sister Anne was assigned to Nativity Convent in Cleveland so she could receive medical attention at the Cleveland Clinic. For one year, she received a scheduled series of paraffin treatments and transfusions. By September 1943 the doctor told Sister Anne that she had chronic rheumatoid arthritis that could be managed but not cured. She continued receiving treatments at the Clinic and teaching at Nativity until 1947.

In August 1947, Sister Anne was assigned to teach at St. Anne School in Gilbert, Arizona. By January 1952 the doctors at the Orthopedic Clinic in Phoenix reported that her x-rays showed a significant
destruction in the joints in her left ankle. They recommended surgery to fuse the ankle bones, which would limit flexibility but allow her to be active without pain. The surgery and recovery period was twelve weeks.

But by January 1953, Sister Anne said she was feeling well and the routine gold shots would have to continue indefinitely. Several years later, she said, “I experienced twenty years of crippling rheumatoid arthritis with continuous treatments, gold shots, numerous blood transfusions and surgery on my hand and foot.”

During that twenty year period (1942-1962), Sister Anne ministered in three states: Illinois, Ohio, and Arizona, and in six parish schools: St. Carthage, Nativity, St. Anne, St. Anthony, St. John Nepomucene and Blessed Sacrament.

During the summer of 1960, Sister Regina Clare, her aunt, and Sister Helen Morrison accompanied Anne on a trip to the Shrine of St. Anne in Quebec. Sister Anne wrote:

> I was so happy to be there even though I didn’t think I could get well. I just prayed for patience and strength. We returned home very grateful to Sister Brigetta [for arranging the trip]. Later on, during the first week of October, a screw fell off my arm brace and I went to the repair shop but no amount of soldering would keep the screw in place so I left the brace there overnight for more work on it. Well, that night, when I moved in my chair, my jaw and neck didn’t hurt – neither did my shoulders, arms, knees, hands or feet! I sprang out of my chair and after so many years I was able to put on my head gear and I walked down to the convent chapel. I kissed the altar. I thanked God over and over and I prayed for all the Sisters who had dressed me, washed me, the Superiors who had been so good to me, the priests who brought Communion to me in my pew so I didn’t have to walk to the Communion rail. I knew my instant cure was a blessing on all who cared and prayed for me

> The next day I made an appointment to see the doctor. When he appeared in the office doorway as he always did, I walked over briskly and extended my hand. When I shook his hand he could only say, “My God, what happened to you?” He was overcome with joy and wonder.

In 1965, Sister Anne was assigned to Nativity School in Cleveland to serve as the last Adrian Dominican principal of the school. She put the school closing into a broader context when she wrote:

> One of my divesting experiences in the late 60s was the closing of Nativity School because the other two neighboring parishes would not consider any kind of merging for the steadily decreasing enrollment in each school. The three schools are closed now and have been since the early 70s. I often think of that whole scenario and the role each of us played in it.

Anne’s next ministry was at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School in Wickliffe, Ohio, where she taught for two years. Then she applied and received a grant to study for one year at Aquinas Institute in Dubuque, Iowa. She taught one more year before transitioning to pastoral ministry for the next twenty-seven years.

From 1974 to 1978 Anne served on the staff at St. Theresa Home in Cincinnati, Ohio. Then she accepted a position at St. Alexis Hospital in Cleveland, where she served on the pastoral team for twelve years. Here is her reflection on this ministry.
Each of us has been given special talents and gifts. Added to this, we have our own life experiences which enable us to show sensitivity, concern and encouragement to those broken in spirit or in need of our understanding. As I derive an inner strength and calm through my personal prayer life, in that measure I am able to bring peace and serenity to the hurt and fragmented lives of the people I serve.

My first instructors in pastoral ministry were the medical people and the Sisters with whom I lived during my twenty years of crippling rheumatoid arthritis. What I studied later was a paraphrasing of their attitude and love in action.

In 1990, Sister Anne accepted a staff position at Casa Maria in West Palm Beach, Florida. For four years she assisted Sister Grace Flowers with office work and provided assistance to the retired Sisters living in the Casa. When Sister Carleen Maly was elected Chapter Prioress, Sister Anne accepted an invitation to work in the Florida Mission Chapter Office as driver for the retired Sisters. She served the Florida Chapter in this capacity for seven years.

During her fourth year at the Chapter Office, Anne participated in an immersion program where she taught English to Sisters of the Greek Rite living in Slovakia. In her annals she shared the following about her experience in Slovakia from March to May 1998.

The Brazilian Sisters, ministering at St. John the Baptist High School in Trebisov, Slovakia, live an austere life. It fits right into our belief that, being together, worshipping, praying, and recreating together, was an opportunity to witness to the Good News. This happened through prayer services in both Slovak and English languages. This immersion experience had a most significant influence on my life. Being able to share my faith, our Dominican customs through prayer services in two languages, certainly internalized the spirit of mission for me. The teaching of English to high school students was also a stimulating venture for me and I appreciated it.

In 2001, Sister Anne Marie came home to Adrian where she died on March 30, 2017, at the age of ninety-four. In her homily, Sister Carleen Maly reflected on the readings Sister Anne had selected for her funeral liturgy. Here is an excerpt from her message.

The readings Anne Marie chose for her funeral, speak of her life guided by God’s Spirit and modeled in the words of Jesus. I can hear Ann reading it to us: “Our lifetime is the passing of a shadow; and our dying cannot be deferred because it is fixed with a seal; and no one returns. Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are real, and use the freshness of creation avidly. Let us have our fill of costly wine and perfumes, and let no springtime blossom pass us by, let us crown ourselves with rosebuds ere they wither.” She enjoyed every minute of life to the full.

Anne would never consider herself the good or true shepherd, although we certainly would, but she would point to Jesus as one who had personal concern for his sheep, not caring about his own interests, going so far as to lay down his life for this flock.

Inclusivity, loving care, laying aside her interests and well-being in the service of others – these are the hallmarks of Anne Marie’s life.

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1 Wisdom 3:1-9, John 10:11-18
LEFT: Sister Anne Marie Snyder with her family, circa 1945-1950

LEFT: Sister Anne Marie, left, with Christa Rusch, Associate, at Florida Chapter Assembly, 1996 RIGHT: From left, Sisters Anne Marie Snyder, Patricia O’Reilly, and Ellen Hirzel
LEFT: Sister Anne Marie teaches a summer religion class in Quemado, New Mexico, 1952 RIGHT: Sister Anne Marie, center, with other members of the pastoral care team at St. Alexis Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio

LEFT: Sister Anne Marie receives the Freedom Foundation Teacher’s Award, May 1969. RIGHT: As chaplain at St. Alexis Hospital, Cleveland, Ohio
LEFT: Ministering as assistant administrator at St. Theresa Home, Cincinnati, Ohio

LEFT: On her 90th birthday, February 25, 2013 RIGHT: Sister Janet Capone, left, then Prioress, with Sister Anne Marie during Sister Anne Marie’s 60th Jubilee, 2001