



Sr. Margaret Mary Whelan, OSF

Professed 1950

"A life of value is not a series of great things well done; it is a series of small things consciously done."

Joan D. Chittister



Sr. Margaret Mary Whelan, OSF, lived a life of value through a series of ministries and experiences in service to others. She was a dedicated and compassionate healthcare provider and caregiver who was always smiling and could always see the bright side of things. Sr. Margaret Mary (formerly Sr. Joseph Margaret) entered the eternal loving embrace of God on Monday, October 14, 2024. She had been a professed member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia for 74 years—entering her 75th jubilee year. Sr. Margaret was born in Dublin, Ireland, to George and Esther and had four siblings. Prior to her entrance to the congregation in 1947, she was a member of Our Lady of Dolours Parish in Glasnevin and attended Holy Faith School in Dublin.

Sr. Margaret earned her RN from St. Mary's Hospital in Philadelphia and her BSN from Seattle University. She ministered in healthcare and administration. She served communities in Tacoma, Washington; Baker and Pendleton, Oregon, as a nurse, nurse supervisor, and administrator for more than 61 years. Sr. Margaret received a letter of recognition from St. Joseph Hospital administration for her impeccable service. She had been tasked with managing the emergency room nursing staff and was able to get the department running more efficiently. "She was very organized and affirmed the staff, helping them to balance work and life and recognizing the importance of family," shared her long-time friend, Sr. Anne McNamara. However, Sr. Margaret noticed another problem. When patients were discharged, they didn't have any help at home, so over time, in the 70s-90s, she began the first home health programs in Pendleton, Baker, and Tacoma. Later, she also started a Parish Nurse Program, which connected nurse volunteers to church congregation members for home visits and wellness checks—a program that continues today. "Outreach was in her blood," said Sr. Anne, "She would get programs established and then move on to the next greatest need. She had a knack for that." Sr. Margaret also served as administrator of the Sisters of St. Francis' retirement home in the west, St. Ann Convent. When at St. Ann's, she said of her elder sisters, "I have never been around such a prayerful group. Everything the sisters do here is prayer. They exude their spirituality." In 1997, she was honored by the Franciscan Federation for her service in healthcare administration. "She was very outgoing and people-oriented," Sr. Anne shared. "There were no strangers in Margaret's life."

Sr. Jeanne Nisley said, "Margaret was always up for a fun adventure. We had ample opportunity for adventure in Eastern Oregon, and a number of these came during our prolonged winter season—trips to the mountains on weekends for snowshoeing, building snowmen to greet the hospital staff, or just sitting around the fireplace. Margaret worked hard and played just as hard. They were memorable times. Margaret's fun-loving spirit is one of the best memories of my time in Baker." Sr. Anne agreed and cherished her time with Margaret as well, "She very much enjoyed gathering for celebrations, taking trips to Puget Sound, and returning home to Ireland every couple of years to visit her very large family. She loved music and movies and knew all the stars. She never missed a chance to watch the Oscars. Her favorite movie was *The Sound of Music*, and she loved singing Edelweiss. She had a beautiful singing voice."

Sr. Margaret Mary wrote of her life, "My life as a Sister of St. Francis has afforded me the opportunity to reach beyond what I perceived as my limits through education, travel, spiritual renewal, and encouragement." When asked how she hoped to be remembered, Sr. Margaret wrote, "as a person who was hospitable, generous and kind—one who enjoyed a good party and company." Sr. Margaret, you have lived a life of love for your God in service to others through small things consciously done. May you rest now in the arms of your loving God.

All services will be held at Assisi House on Friday, October 18, 2024, and will be livestreamed. Viewing will begin at 9:30 A.M., followed by Mass of Christian Burial at 11 A.M. Burial will be in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.