



Sr. Francis Anita Rizzo, OSF Professed 1950

“When you follow in the path of your father, you learn to walk like him.” African Proverb

Sr. Francis Anita Rizzo, OSF, 95, died at Assisi House on Tuesday, June 10, 2025. She was born Theresa Ann Bernadette Rizzo in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Francis and Anna (Toner) Rizzo—one of four children and the only girl in a house full of boys. She was a member of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish and a graduate of West Catholic High School. She entered the congregation in 1947, professed her first vows in 1950, and was a professed Sister of St. Francis for 75 years. She earned a B.S. in English with a minor in French from Mount St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Her years in ministry were spent primarily in education and congregational service.



When asked about her decision to enter the congregation, Sr. Francis Anita reflected, “Before I entered, the Holy Spirit planted the seed of my vocation. That seed was nurtured by the example of my parents, who gave me both roots and wings. I entered the convent and met many sisters whom I have enjoyed living with. My Franciscan missions were most satisfying and rewarding.” Sr. Rose Christopher Sheridan, who knew Sr. Francis Anita as a fellow student at West Catholic before she entered the congregation, shared, “Sr. Francis Anita was always cheerful and good for a laugh. We both had the same sponsor sister when we entered.”

Sr. Francis began her ministry by teaching in various schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore for 18 years, then served an additional four years in the Diocese of Wilmington and one year in the Diocese of Charleston. However, most of her religious life was devoted to serving her fellow sisters in local house ministry. She described herself as the “person behind the scenes,” always willing to serve the congregation and its members in whatever way was needed. Sr. Peggy Egan shared, “I loved her to the moon. She was the sweetest thing in the world and just a joy to be around. Very willing to help.” The staff at Our Lady of Angels Convent fondly remember Sr. Francis for her constant prayers, blessings, and her spontaneous visits to sing a song or tell them what a wonderful job they were doing.

In her free time, Sr. Francis Anita enjoyed reading, music, and dancing. Though quiet by nature, she loved gathering and celebrating with her fellow sisters. At many congregational events, you would find her on the dance floor, sharing in Franciscan joy with a huge smile. “Music was everything to her,” Sr. Peggy added. “When she would get anxious, we would sing ‘You Are My Sunshine’ to her and with her, and it soothed her nerves.”

Sr. Francis Anita truly walked the walk and talked the talk of her Franciscan vocation and love of God. She wrote, “Throughout my many years as a sister, the seeds of my vocation continued to grow. To me, following Christ lovingly is the basis of a Franciscan life.” Sr. Jane LaManna agreed, saying, “She was very, very hospitable. She would do most anything she was asked, with a smile on her face.” Sr. Francis once shared, “It has been a special vocation to bear witness to Christ as a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia and to the Church, the people of God. I thank God for the gift of my vocation.”

Sr. Francis Anita, you followed in the footsteps of our Lord and lived your life by His example. May you now rest with the God of all blessings—at peace and secure in that Divine Love that knows no bounds.

*All services will be held at Assisi House on Thursday, June 12, 2025, and will be livestreamed.
A Christian Wake Service will be held at 9:30 A.M. Mass of Christian Burial will follow at 11 A.M.,
with burial in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.*

