

Sister Noelita Marie Rodriguez, OSF

Professed 1954

*“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”
~ Matthew 25: 40*



Sr. Noelita Rodriguez lived a life of loving service, with a special place in her heart for immigrants and those experiencing poverty, neglect, or abuse. Born Gloria Esther—one of 12 children—to Laurearo and Josefa, the Rodriguez family attended San Antonio de Padua in Barranquitas, Puerto Rico, and Sr. Noelita was a graduate of Monseñor Willinger Academy. While she met the Sisters of St. Francis at the academy, she credits Fr. Quevedo with leading her to the congregation, which she entered in 1951 and professed her first vows in 1954.

Sr. Noelita’s life of service was inspired by the example of her mother. She remembers her mother, Josefa, cooking extra food and taking it to those in need in the neighborhood. Even though Josefa had 12 biological children, she found it in her heart to adopt a little boy who was found abandoned in an apartment with no food, and some years later a baby girl who needed a loving home. As a young woman, Sr. Noelita wondered, “Could I ever be as generous in giving as my parents, especially my mom?” She wanted to be just like her!

Sr. Noelita spent 35 years in education ministry, in both primary and secondary schools. Most of her teaching was on the West Coast where she taught in California, Oregon, and Washington. Her last four years teaching were in her hometown of Barranquitas at San Antonio de Padua.

Following her many years in the classroom, Sr. Noelita moved to Philadelphia and took on a new role in social services. First, she ministered in migrant and refugee services with Catholic Social Services for nine years. She then worked for Children’s Aid Society, providing services in the home to children and families. After several years in this ministry, Sr. Noelita asked to be able to continue to her ministry on her own. She explained, “I asked Sr. Kathy Dougherty for permission to continue working with the poorest of my clients without a salary. I feel very grateful to the community for that privilege, and I am very proud of our community’s commitment to the poor.” Sr. Noelita went on to describe these 16 years as the happiest years of her life, working with people experiencing significant challenges, including housing insecurity, and physical and emotional abuse. Her work included both physical and emotional support, providing food, clothing, and a listening ear. When Sr. Noelita moved to Assisi House, the people she helped assumed her ministry, ensuring that struggling families in North Philly continued to receive needed support. Sr. Noelita continued to support the families in her own way, inviting her nieces and nephews to help support 29 families each year with toothbrushes, toothpaste, clothing, toys, and food for the holidays. Looking back on her life, she wrote, “In truth, I have become like my mom in my outreach to those most in need!” In her free time, Sr. Noelita enjoyed sewing, decorating, and flower arranging. She spent many hours making hand towels for the donors and volunteers who continued her ministry in North Philly.

Sr. Noelita, thank you for your example of a life lived in loving service to those on the margins of society.

All services will be held at Assisi House on Wednesday, March 11, 2026.

A Christian Wake Service will be held at 9:30 A.M., followed by a viewing.

Mass of Christian Burial will be at 11 A.M., and burial will be in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.

The services will be livestreamed.

