

SISTER FRANCIS REGIS McDONOUGH

February 23, 1925 - February 26, 2011



I have had the privilege of being a good friend of Sister Francis Regis and her family for more than 45 years. Growing up with four brothers, Francis was the “Big Sister” we never had. Sister Francis Regis was a quiet, soft spoken, gentle woman. She lived a simple life. Always happy and content! Her name was never in the limelight. She was never the one to receive accolades or have her name mentioned for this or that accomplishment. However, Francis always rejoiced and was very happy when she read about or heard of any other sister receiving an award or any kind of recognition. When talking about it, she would always add “...and she is one of ours.”

That was enough to make Francis happy! She knew she was a gift from God and was content with her greatness and smallness, knowing herself and being true to herself.

Anna Mae McDonough was the eighth of nine children born to Irish immigrant parents, Martin J. and Cecilia Foley McDonough. She had four brothers and four sisters. All have gone to God except her sister, Dorothy and her brother, Leo. Dorothy and her husband, Ed, are with us tonight. Her brother Leo and his wife Peggy live in Michigan. Leo is recovering from pneumonia and is unable to travel at this time. We also have nieces, nephews, and cousins with us tonight.

After Anna Mae graduated from Swissvale High School in 1943, Sister M. Genevieve Lauder, the principal of Saint Anselm Grade School, asked to meet with her. No, not to talk about a possible vocation, but to ask her to teach a third grade class at Saint Anselm School the next Fall. That she did, and thus began her long career as an elementary school teacher. Anna Mae entered the Sisters of Charity on September 8, 1944, taught in elementary schools for the next fifty years and loved every minute of it.

Francis received her BS from Seton Hill and completed her teaching certification. This indeed was just enough for her to do what she loved best – teach children. Sister Francis Regis was never missioned too far from home. She taught in several parish schools in the Pittsburgh Diocese and a few schools in the Greensburg Diocese. Francis went a little distance further to Maryland. (Three different times to Bethesda and two different times to Glyndon). She was always happy and loved the children. One of her extra-curricular interests was organizing mini-festivals to benefit the Missions at both Mother of Sorrows School in Murrysville and at Saint Therese School in Munhall. Francis was always available after school to give extra help to any child who needed it. She continued to hear from her students over the years – now young adults and some not-so-young adults.

When she ended her teaching career, she worked in a Senior Citizen High Rise for a couple of years and then it was back to school again. This time to Saint James School in Wilksburg where she worked in the library three days a week for the next eleven years. Sister Francis Regis retired from there in 2006 at the young age of 81.

Besides her God, Our Lady, and her Community, Francis had three other loves: her family, her garden, and God’s little creatures, the birds.

Her Family: Each and every one of them was special in her eyes. She loved sharing life with her siblings and her nieces and nephews, who knew her as Aunt Anna Mae or Aunt Sister, and the next two generations of little ones, as well. She was always happy to see them, to hear from them and to receive pictures of the newcomers. Francis was very much a part of my family as well, and was known to my nieces and nephew and their little ones as Aunt Francis. They were very special to her. And she was just as special to all of them.

Her Garden: Her pride and joy was her garden along with the many house plants she nurtured. Francis would work many hours in the garden regardless of the temperature and loved every minute of it. Her picturesque garden certainly portrayed the tender loving care it received from her.



Then come **The Birds** – True to her name, Francis loved and cared for the birds—feeding them, cleaning the bird house regularly, and always making sure they had water to drink.

Francis, you loved all of God’s creation. You found great joy in whatever you did in your lifetime. In your own simple way you were a shining example to me and to the many people whose lives you’ve touched.

You knew that the people who make a difference in the lives of others are not the ones with the most credentials...the most money... nor the most awards. They simply are the ones who cared the most about others. Thank you for caring!

We love you, Francis, and we now give you back to the Lord and His mother, Mary. May you enjoy a fine reunion with your family and friends in heaven.



As lovely as Erin’s rolling hills—
Fair as its lakes and streams—
Joyful as its laughter—
Bright as all its dreams—
Lucky as its people—
Happy as the leprechauns, too—
May that be how each and every day in heaven
Will always be for you!

May eternal light shine upon you forever and may your soul and the souls of all of the faithful departed rest in the peace of the Risen Christ. Amen!

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Anne M. Toomey
February 28, 2011*