

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER ANTOINETTE BOSCO

October 27, 1930–May 4, 2021



This morning we gather here to honor and celebrate our dear Sister Antoinette Bosco who had been in our company for so many years and is now in her eternal resting place with God. I have known “Ruthie” Bosco since my high school days at Elizabeth Seton. She was a year ahead of me then and a year ahead of me in the novitiate. She was fun-loving, had a great sense of humor, and an infectious laugh. Just my type!

Sister Antoinette was a simple, quiet soul who did great things in her ministries for those whom she served—children, parents, teachers, parishioners. She was forward-thinking and understood that “black lives matter” long before that concept was accepted as much as it is today. She seemed to have a grasp on the concept of “multiculturalism” long before many of us did, and she ministered to people of color willingly and lovingly everywhere, especially in Abbeville, Louisiana, at Ozanam Center, and at Saint James School in Wilkinsburg.

Sister Antoinette was born on October 27, 1930, to Michael and Alice Balme Bosco. She had three brothers, Edward, Bob, and John. She was beloved by her family and she loved them dearly. She was so pleased to have her nieces visit her during the time of her last illness.

She entered the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill on September 8, 1948. She received her bachelor’s degree from Seton Hill University and a master’s degree in elementary education from the University of Pittsburgh. Sister Antoinette began teaching in 1951 at Cathedral School in Altoona and continued to teach in Arizona at Saint John, Tucson, at Casa Elizabeth Seton, and at Saint Anselm. She was missioned in 1961

to Abbeville, where she taught at Our Lady of Lourdes School. Returning from Abbeville, she continued to teach at Saint Stephen and at Saint Therese School in Munhall. She then went to Frederick Ozanam Center in the Hill District where she became principal and teacher. In 1974, Sister Antoinette became principal at St. Pius X, Mt. Pleasant; and in 1980 at Immaculate Conception School, Irwin.

Professionally, she was recognized for her leadership and her curricular planning and development. She loved what she did and she cared deeply for her students and teachers. She promoted multicultural reading materials for students long before they became a reality. She was creative in her manner of dealing with the needs of her students and maintained a highly developed plan for meeting their needs. As principal at Ozanam Center, Sister Antoinette gave her time and energy to support the Ozanam Strings, which was under the direction of Sister Francis Assisi. Sister Antoinette took pride in the accomplishments of the young musicians and had a strong desire to see them succeed. She supported and encouraged them to be the best they could be. On her fiftieth jubilee, she was asked how her ministry reflected who she was. She answered, *“In my contacts with children and families as a teacher and administrator, I have tried to give them a sense of God’s presence in our lives and a strong foundation of values.”* Sister Antoinette lived what she preached.

Sister Antoinette was a great storyteller. In 1961, when she was in Louisiana and teaching at Our Lady of Lourdes, Hurricane Cara stormed into the Louisiana/Texas area. At that time, the sisters were living in the town of Kaplan. The hurricane spawned a tornado that attacked Kaplan with fury. The sisters’ convent was destroyed, but the sisters were miraculously able to walk out of it unharmed. For the Community Annals, Sister Antoinette wrote a seven-page, single-spaced description of that experience. As I read this, I thought she might have been

planning to get on the editorial board of the Washington Post! In part, her story goes as follows:

“Before they knew what was happening, they saw the windows blown in, the pictures blown off the walls, and found themselves helplessly thrown on the floor. . . . The thunderous noise that accompanied the destruction finally ended. . . . At the same time, we could hear the cries of the people. . . . If ever we doubted that we were appreciated by our people, the next few moments were to erase every trace of it. . . . Before we were even on our feet, whole families—their own homes completely demolished— were running to the convent to help the sisters.”

In her story, Sister Antoinette told of the bishop coming to survey the scene. She continues with “he took one look at the debris of the convent and took one look at us, and then, shaking his head, he simply said, ‘Miraculous.’” He promised that they would get a new convent and they did.

In December 1967 when Sister Antoinette was at Ozanam Center, the Association of Pittsburgh Priests (APP) called for an African-American director of Ozanam. The tension around this issue continued for a few months. However, on April 4, 1968, when the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was murdered, the fury of the African-American people was unleashed and escalated into violence. The National Guard was called out to prevent more violence and destruction of property. Sister Antoinette sent an account of the activity for publication in the Community Newsletter. (She is still writing!) Sisters Helen Mary, Marcella Mary, Francis Assisi, and Antoinette stayed in the Center. Sister Helen Mary said, “If we leave, who will take care of the people.” As riots erupted, the sisters went out to help. Sister Antoinette remembered Sister Helen Mary telling the police, as they were heading back home after working with some people, that the sisters were going beyond the blockade to return to the House of Mary.

Sister Antoinette volunteered in outreach programs such as the prison GED program, the Homeless Student Initiative, and East End Cooperative Ministries. It would not be too far-fetched to say that she had a colorful and eventful life.

Sister Antoinette did what she did with a joyful heart and a generous spirit. She was a model of quiet simplicity, humility, and charity that knew no bounds. We salute you, Antoinette, and pray that you know of the love we have for you and the inspiration you were and are to us. Thank you!

In her own words: *“As I look back at these many years, I am filled with gratitude for all the blessings that have been mine and for the many ways God has been involved in my life. That special call has led me to many experiences of Church in different cultures, and to so many faith-filled people who have touched my life.”*

Funeral Liturgy Reflection

Sister Virginia Pascaretta

May 7, 2021