

BIOGRAPHY OF SISTER MARY ANN MATACHINSKAS, SSND

Sister Mary Ann was born in South Boston, Massachusetts, to Stephen Matachinskas and Mary Margaret Masionis on September 21, 1944. She was baptized at St. Peter's Lithuanian Church on October 15, 1944. Several years later, two boys, Joseph and John completed the family. Mr. Matachinskas was employed by General Electric which resulted in rather frequent relocations of the family.

From kindergarten through sixth grade, Mary Ann attended six schools located in Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. Their next move, due once again to her father's employment, was to Tyler, Texas. Mary Ann completed her elementary education at St. Gregory School and her secondary education at Tyler Catholic High School, both under the direction of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Mary Ann got to know the School Sisters well and was drawn to their example of peace and happiness. She took her first step in joining them by going to St. Louis, Missouri, for her first years of formation as a religious sister. She was given the name Stephen Mary and professed her first vows on August 1, 1964. Five years later she professed her final vows at the SSND Motherhouse in Irving, Texas. She then returned to her baptismal name.

Mary Ann received her higher education in several places beginning with a bachelor's degree from the former Notre Dame College in St. Louis. She earned a master's degree from Arkansas State College in Conway, Arkansas.

From 1966 until 1973, Mary Ann was a full-time primary and elementary school teacher. She taught at St. Joseph's, Conway, Arkansas, St. Paul, Fort Worth, Texas, St. Gregory, Houma, Louisiana, and Visitation of Our Lady Marrero, Louisiana.

On February 12, 1974, Mary Ann, and four other School Sisters – having had training to become missionaries – traveled to Ghana, West Africa. This was to be her place of residence and ministry for the next 47 years.

From 1947–1990 she served at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Accra as Director of the Department of Religious Education of Ghana National Catholic Secretariat. She worked with catechists, mainly those in the outstations and including some in the neighboring country of Togo. Later, she became the Executive secretary of Ghana Bishop Conference.

In 1990, Archbishop Amissah of Cape Coast, asked Mary Ann to consider opening a new school in the Cape Coast area. In due time, Mary Ann accepted the invitation and asked Sister Dorothy Ann Balsler to join her. When they arrived in Cape Coast, the school was still being built, so they taught classes either in the unfinished church or, weather permitting, under the trees.

As the years went by, school was finished and many happy parents enrolled their children. In 2011, there was a grand 20th anniversary celebration of Mary Queen of Peace School. As the headmistress (principal) of the school, Mary Ann could proudly present students from the

Montessori pre-school program, the primary school and the junior high school. Her friend, Archbishop Amissah, had died but his dream lived on.

As an SSND she served as the Vocation and Affiliate Director for Ghana Area from 1988–1994. From 1997–2000, she served as Ghana Area Leader for the then SSND District of Africa Leadership Team. From 2000–2005, she was the Director of Temporary Professed for Ghana Area and between 2003–2009, she was a Member of SSND District Assembly. Sister Mary Ann has been a member of SSND Development Committee – Province of Africa from 2010 till date. She became Affiliate Director for Ghana Area from 2011–2013 and from 2016–2019 was a Member, SSND Province of Africa Assembly.

Many thanks were due to the hard work of Mary Ann and others, including young and energetic African School Sisters of Notre Dame, whom she prepared for leadership roles.

By the year 2021, when Mary Ann was due for a home leave, she was aware of the need for a good medical check-up. She moved to one of our convents in Dallas, where the sisters took good care of her and saw to her many visits to doctors. Mary Ann knew her condition of cancer was very serious, and even though her hope and prayer was to return to Ghana, she accepted God's will and died peacefully on January 23, 2023.

The Liturgy of Christian Burial was held at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Covington, on February 17. A prayer service and sharing of memories began at 10:00 a.m. and the liturgy, with Father Rodney Bourg, as presider followed at 10:30 a.m.

In keeping with Mary Ann's desire to be buried at Chatawa, her cremains will be sent there for burial.