



Sister Ann Pressler, SC
(Sister Marita Cordis)
Entered eternal life on March 7, 2021

We knew her in different ways; we knew her by different names. We knew her as a cherished sister, a beloved aunt, a companion in the Company of Charity, a loyal friend, a dedicated teacher. We knew her as Annmarie, Sister Marita Cordis, Marita, Reitz (a corruption of Marita) and finally, Miz Presley. However we knew her by whatever name we called her: she was genuine; she knew who she was and she owned who she was. She was caring; she always had a helping hand for the “little guy”. She had a marvelous sense of humor; she was a gifted artist.

Marita was born in Highland Park to Anna and Chester Pressler. She had two sisters, Elaine and as she called her “her new baby sister, Barbara”. Even after 30 years she still referred to Barbara as her new baby sister. Chet and Richard were her two brothers. It was at Saint Peter’s High School, New Brunswick that she met our sisters and her sponsor, Sister Matilda. Marita was involved in education all her life. She served at Tenafly as one of her first teaching assignments. It was there that she and Sister Maryann Boyle, also known as Trish, became friends. That friendship was to last a lifetime until Trish’s death.

Marita and a group of Sisters of Charity worked on a plan to teach at a Catholic school in Newark for those who could not afford even the minimal tuition of other Catholic schools. That plan fell through and they found themselves teaching at different public schools in Newark. It was there that Marita spent the rest of her teaching ministry at Bragaw Avenue public school.

She loved to regale people with her stories of teaching in Newark. She recounted the story of a student announcing “Oh look - there’s Culardo while surveying a map of Colorado. Another student said “pardon you” when Marita was blocking the student’s view. Marita corrected her saying you should say “pardon me”. The student then corrected her by explaining that Marita was the one who was in the way.

In her retirement years she volunteered at Josephine’s place in Elizabeth and at Saint Ann Villa at Florham Park.

She loved Harvey Cedars. She and I spent many happy days cooking during the summer months. It was nothing for us to prepare a meal for 100 people. As time went on a group of us spent a week at Harvey every summer for over 25 years. We looked forward to it every year. She relished diving into the surf.

Marita was part of a prayer group that met once a month on Fridays. The prayer group started to gather in 2001. A charter member of the prayer group was Father Gerard Lair. Father Gerard was called home to the Lord on the same day that Ann was. I can envision Reitz and Gerard now enjoying a long gabfest together.

Another thing that Marita relished was enjoying a happy hour with friends on weekends. There were chips, dips, cheeses, olives and her favorite beverage, Glenlivet scotch.

In 1974, Sister Michael Julia returned from her missionary work in Bolivia. She became the Director for Saint Ann Villa. Through mutual acquaintances she and Reitz became good friends and eventually the best of friends. In 1978, Reitz invited Sister Michael Julia (also known as Mary Ellen Verdon) to live with her in Madison. They lived together in Madison for five years and then moved to Parsippany. They lived there for the next 40 years. Their home was a safe harbor where one could find support, acceptance, and affirmation. Everyone was welcome.

They were good neighbors and were equally blessed to have good neighbors to help them. In recent years, their neighbors would look out for them and help them make their house more accessible. One of Reitz's favorite activities would take place on Wednesday mornings when two of the neighbors' children would perform songs and dances for Reitz and Mary Ellen.

And now we come to bear a fond farewell to Reitz. I am sure that the good Lord welcomed her with the same hospitality she extended to others. Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Lord.

Sister Gloria O'Brien, SC