



In Loving Memory

Sister Joan Emily Kaul

On October 17, 1925, little Joan Emily was born on a farm outside of Watertown, Wisconsin, to Michael Kaul and Helen Kreuziger Kaul. She was re-born anew with the waters of Baptism at their parish church in Watertown 11 days later. She says in her biography, “I was blessed with wonderful parents, a 120-acre farm as my playground and the gift of faith.”

Joan was the first of five children. Her brother Ed was the second child and she considered him to be her twin. Next in the family was a sister who only lived to be three. Some years later, her brother Tom was born and finally her sister, Bernadette, who was born when Joan was 19 and had already left home for the candidature.

Sister Joan Emily met the School Sisters of Notre Dame in her schooling at St. Henry’s. However, she had no thoughts of being a sister until she was in the public high school. She says, “It took me two years to decide to become a sister and another year and a half to decide to be a foreign missionary with the Maryknoll sisters.” When she reached out to them she got a, “kind but definite refusal,” which completely collapsed her dreams. She goes on to say, “On Good Friday, I received the grace to try at The School Sisters of Notre Dame. I realized with a rush of gladness, how simple it was. All I had to do was keep trying until I hit upon the order God wanted me to join. And this time He said, ‘Yes’.”

The candidature was a happy time for her. In her second year she went to Holy Assumption, West Allis for 10 days to student teach. She notes, “During this interval, two things happened. President Roosevelt died; and I received the first inkling of what would, in the future, be a real trial - I was not a born teacher.” She opened herself to learn the tough realities of life within herself and around her.

On her Reception Day into the community, August 10, 1945, she had, again, a clear picture of both what was happening to her and what was memorable outside those chapel walls. “As we stood waiting to receive our candles, excited whispers passed along the line. ‘The war is over! The war is over!’ The second atom bomb had been dropped. World War II was over. The official declaration came several days later.”

Her ministry was primarily as teacher in the lower grades with a few excursions into middle and upper grades. She taught for 34 years in the following places in Wisconsin: Milwaukee, De Pere, Burlington, Marshfield, Marinette, Campbelsport and Mt. Calvary. She took a one-year break during this time to work at Notre Dame Health Care Center in community service. “Very delightful were my years here.” Later, she returned to serve as community leader for six years. Sister Joan Emily completed her years of service working for 15 years at St. Peter, Beaver Dam. She started by being a religious Education Coordinator. She then served as secretary to the religious education department and to the liturgist. It became clear to her here that what she had done all her life was this: “I

Birth
October 17, 1925

Baptism
October 28, 1925

Profession
August 11, 1948

Death
December 14, 2020

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
Cemetery,
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

continued

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loved the mission of unity, of making one.” This was significant, especially at this time because the three parishes in Beaver Dam (St. Peter, St. Michael and St. Patrick) were beginning to come together as one. This Tri-parish became St. Katherine Drexel Parish and she was a part of that happening. The merger became official on July 1, 2003, and on July 30, 2003, she left the mission and returned to Mt. Calvary to live in retirement. It was like a home-coming. She said, “I love every inch of it.” She was there until the community moved to Elm Grove nine years later.

Sister Joan Emily had the gift of always seeing the best in her companions. She was good at community building. It wasn’t what she accomplished, but who she was: a heart for the poor and those who were treated unjustly. She now enjoys the one-ness she looked for in the communion of saints.

Sister Joan Emily’s celebration of life was on January 5, 2020, with burial in the Elm Grove cemetery.

By Sister Marie Rose Van Deuren, SSND

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