



In Loving Memory

Sister Lydia Marie Borja

Sister Lydia was born in Yona, Guam to Joaquin Castro and Maria Porcaigue Borja on October 17, 1934. She was the second child of what would be 13 children. Her parents didn't have much, but she says that she did not remember going to bed hungry. Each child was given a special chore in the house and being the second oldest, she had more than her share. She says that growing up in a big family was indeed a joy and a blessing.

When she was seven years old, she clearly remembers the day of the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan on December 8th, 1941, the feast of Immaculate Conception when everyone was attending Mass. She recalls, "As soon as we heard the bombing, my parents gathered all of us to go someplace to hide for safety. We lived in a cave in the jungle for a while. Living in this condition wasn't at all comfortable. We were afraid that the Japanese would find us. We also feared being punished for nothing. We had to search for food in the jungle for survival. We managed to stay healthy."

Schooling was difficult under occupation. She hardly remembers what took place in the classroom for these four years. All she remembers is that they were put to work hard in the fields planting vegetables. She says, "Despite the many things they did to us, our devotion to Mary and her Divine Son didn't cease. The Lord protected us very well."

On July 21, 1944, 55,000 U.S. Marines recaptured Guam and took the people from hiding to safety. Even though they knew they were safe, they continued to be on the watch for Japanese soldiers hiding in the deep jungle. They were placed in a concentration camp where they were fed with rationed food. We all learned how to survive on very little.

The next big date in her life was in 1949 when the School Sisters of Notre Dame arrived. "Immediately, registration was opened and my parents sent me to attend St. Francis School. The sisters made a deep impression on me and I became a daily communicant. Having the sisters for my teachers, I became interested in their way of life and I was drawn to be one of them. They were women of faith! This close connection to them made me what I am today," she says in her autobiography.

The summer she graduated from eighth grade she entered the Aspiranture in Guam. She stayed there for three years and in the summer of 1955, she boarded the Pan American Airline to go to Milwaukee. She was sent to Prairie du Chien for the completion of her senior year in high school. She was now convinced of becoming a good School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) sister.

She entered the Candidature on August 3, 1956, and was received into the community on July 2, 1957. As a novice, she was ready to make a complete resignation of the things of the world and prayed that she would remain faithful in His service, with the grace of God. There she learned the sacred mystery of the interior life and how to meditate. She learned to sacrifice herself in the little details of the day in order to purify her soul for her complete oblation when pronouncing her vows. She was professed July 22, 1958, and was sent to Notre

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Birth
October 17, 1934

Baptism
record lost in World War II

Profession
July 22, 1958

Death
March 15, 2021

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

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Dame of the Lake, Mequon, Wisconsin, as a student for a year.

As a young religious, her mother was struck with Parkinson's disease. Since she was so active, it was hard to see her decline in health. She continued working for the family until she could not move. She remained cheerful nonetheless. From this, Sister Lydia Marie received the courage to take any suffering as a gift from God. Her mother died in February of 1980.

Her first mission was at Mount Carmel in Agat, Guam where she taught the primary grades from 1959 to 1963. Then she was missioned to the following schools in Guam teaching junior high math: San Vincente, Barrigada ; St. Francis, Yona; Notre Dame High School, Talofoto, a total of 51 years. There was one break in teaching when she attended the University of Guam from 1968 to 1969.

In 1989, she was asked by our General Superior, Sister Pat Flynn, to offer community service in the Generalate. She says, "While in Rome I had the experience to drive like the Romans. I really had the most wonderful time. I also had the opportunity to spend a holiday in Germany visiting my cousin, Ruth Tajalle." She also vacationed in Austria. She was grateful for this enriching experience and returned to teaching in 1993.

In 2001 she was elected to the Regional Council. She says, "Being a part of the Regional Council, the Leadership Conference took me to Chatawa, Mississippi, and Mankato, Minnesota." She was teaching part-time also at St. Francis, Yona. She says about this, "Only God in his mysterious ways gave me the strength and endurance to carry both ministries."

She suffered a very difficult loss in 2005 when God called two of her sisters to eternal life. In March, her sister Alice died at a young age in Anchorage, Alaska while flying home. She had a stroke and the plane took the closest landing. Then in August, Maria died. She was so hurt with these losses that she was given permission to take a sabbatical to mourn.

In 2011, she offered to do some volunteer work at Elm Grove, Wisconsin. She said that she could relax and enjoy life in a different way and she had time to reflect on all the things that have happened to her. She also experienced the closing of our Milwaukee Province, witnessing the transformation of the new Central Pacific Province.

Sister Lydia was generous and joyful in her dedicated life of service and found God's blessing wherever she went, down to the very last community in which she lived – Our Lady of the Angels in Greenfield, Wisconsin.

By Sister Elise Zettel

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Central Pacific Province

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