



Birth
April 28, 1916

Baptism
May 12, 1916

Profession
Aug. 21, 1936

Death
March 17, 2016

Burial
Chatawa Cemetery
Chatawa, Mississippi

*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

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Joselia Kleinpeter, SSND

It must have been with joy and gratitude that little Mary Mildred was welcomed as the first child in the Kleinpeter home. Almost a hundred years ago, on April 28, 1916 she was born in New Orleans to Francis Joseph and Mary (Cresap) Kleinpeter. Five sisters and four brothers were to follow.

In her biography that is quoted frequently here, Sister Joselia described the delightful and challenging Kleinpeter home, “We were well disciplined, yet my daddy said, ‘See how we spoil you all.’ My mother lovingly introduced us, ‘These are my JEWELS.’ At other times she said, ‘I must have the patience of a saint with you children.’”

“I worked hard helping my parents with my younger siblings.” Mildred attributes the Kleinpeter clan’s great family life to the fact that, “My daddy’s grocery store was connected to our home. My parents were always there for us.”

Both parents came from large families. Even in her extended family Mildred was the oldest of the cousins and fondly recalled summer vacations. “What real life experiences we had living on grandma and grandpa’s farm and playing with our cousins near our own age. Amazing was the experience of watching Daddy flag down the train in Kleinpeter, Louisiana for our return trip to New Orleans.”

The Kleinpeters lived in Sacred Heart Parish where the children attended the parish elementary and secondary school taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The kind words and the example of her teachers nourished the seed of Mildred’s vocation.

Joselia related the following incident that moved her toward her life choice, “My fourth grade teacher, Sister Reginald Helmsing, told us all about candidates and about the reception and profession ceremonies for one becoming an SSND. She said there wasn’t a dry eye in the church during the covering of the newly professed with a pall, and I told myself that was the way it would be for me.” In high school, Sisters Hortense and Lelia helped Mildred affirm ever more clearly her call to religious life.

“I prayed much, went to daily Mass and loved helping the sisters during my days at Sacred Heart where in 1933 I was a member of the first class to graduate from the high school.” So it was not a surprise to Mildred’s parents and they considered it a great blessing that God chose their oldest child for his service. Mildred entered in August 1933 – the 100th anniversary of the founding of the congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She received the habit in 1935 and the name Mary Joselia which honored both her parents. In 1936 she pronounced her first vows.

Sister Joselia’s professional preparation began at Notre Dame Junior College in St. Louis, then she received a degree from Loyola University in New Orleans. Her lifelong learning was expanded at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister M. Joselia Kleinpeter



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**School Sisters
of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

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THROUGH EDUCATION

Travel with her mother helped round out Joselia's formal education. There was a pilgrimage to the Shrines of St. Joseph and St. Anne in Canada. Then, with students, she visited sites she'd seen only in texts: London, Athens, Rome, Geneva and Lourdes, Sister left a short log entitled Journey of Sister Joselia with her Trunk. After its initial trip to St. Louis, it accompanied her as she taught children in Nebraska, California, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, and Louisiana. "Each had its own culture, different nationalities, and experiences." For nearly half a century Sister Joselia taught children in the primary grades. She led them to love truth and one sister said it was an emotional experience to observe the fervor of little children that Sister Joselia had prepared for their first Communion.

One of Sister Joselia's second grade pupils valued her. "She was an excellent teacher who loved her students." Another said, "I've never forgotten she taught all the boys and girls in our second grade class how to square dance! I loved her."

Her success as a teacher of the primary child is attested by the fact that she was regularly secured as the master for intern teachers.

Sister Joselia gratefully acknowledged her joys in community and her teaching experience, "Through many places of teaching and my own extended education, plus traveling, I have had a wonderful life filled with the blessings of Jesus and Mother Mary."

As Joselia transitioned from almost 50 years in the classroom to that of part time staff at St. Mary of the Pines in 1979 she said, "I have had a very rich background, but now I am enjoying a different life. It is a pleasure to have known and loved all the renewal sisters from our North American provinces and our global missionaries too. It was a delightful experience being a tour guide for the senior citizens who come here for an outing and for retreats. I have many other interesting tasks that keep me busy all of the time."

In the early 1990s, physical infirmities limited her activity to prayer and to being welcoming and grateful to all who visited her. She shared vicariously in their ministry activities and promised prayer. This she did until shortly before her peaceful death on March 17, just a few weeks before her 100th birthday and before celebrating the eightieth anniversary of her profession.

A thought attributed to John Milton seems to express a life of grateful joy. One cannot think of Sister Joselia without recalling how thankful she was for any small or great service given her.

*Gratitude bestows reverence,
allowing us to encounter in everyday epiphanies,
those transcendent moments of awe that change forever
how we experience life and the world.*

We know the expectation she expressed is fulfilled, "After my earthly journey is finished I will rest peacefully among the lovely pine trees in our cemetery across the road. There among my companion sisters we will await our resurrection on the last day."

With gratitude for her life, we say, "May Sister Joselia rest in peace."

By Sister MarieClare Powell, SSND