



In Loving Memory

Sister Sister Mary Josephe Misevicz

Life began for Sister Mary Josephe (born Rita Clara) on June 21, 1925, with her twin sister Therese Martin in Berlin, Wisconsin. Her parents, Joseph Peter Misevic and Mary (Clappa) Misevic along with three brothers and four sisters were not expecting twins! Unfortunately, she would not get to enjoy the experience of growing up with her twin sister because Therese died when she was three months old. The family had already lost a son, Alphonsus, who had died at the age of twelve; and it was not long after that when the family suffered another loss: the oldest daughter, Lucille (Lulu) who was crippled by Polio. Sister Mary Josephe remembered, “She had been the sunshine of our family, spreading joy wherever she went for her nineteen years.”

Birth
June 21, 1925

Baptism
June 28, 1925

Profession
August 8, 1944

Death
January 28, 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

Rita enjoyed accompanying Vivian, her older sister, when she went to Sunday Vespers. This is where she first met the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). So, it was not surprising that one morning during Holy Mass, she slipped into the pew next to Sister Superior M. Simonetta and asked her if she could hold the “big Jesus” on her rosary. Sister turned, looked down at her with a smile and said, “Yes, little one.” This was her first step toward her religious vocation.

Sister Mary Josephe’s parents were devout Catholics. Her father had come from Poland when he was 17 years old and she never forgot the evenings they gathered to say night prayers. She says, “We practiced many beautiful Polish customs.”

When she graduated from elementary school in 1938, she faced the big decision about where she would attend high school. She was reluctant to bring up the topic with her parents because they might not agree with her deep desire to begin her life with the SSND. She waited until August when she told her parents that she really wanted to enter the convent. She discovered that they had been hoping that God would choose one of their daughters and they gave their consent without hesitation. Her father said, “If that is what you want, child, go in God’s name.” Her mother was beginning to lose her eyesight and would probably have wanted her to help out at home, but she readily gave her consent. So, with the help of her sister Vivian, she let her will be known to the sisters and she very soon received a letter from Sister Mary Theodora inviting her to Longwood as a Convent Junior. With hurried preparation she was ready to leave home with Vivian and her husband who drove her to the Academy of our Lady, Chicago.

Three years later in 1941, she entered the Candidature, in which she came to realize how good God was to her. Her dream became a reality when, on August 4, 1943, she donned the garb of an SSND Novice. She says, “My happiness was now complete.” Her parents were overjoyed because she now bore their names. It was during this time in the novitiate that her brother Joe who was serving on a Navy destroyer, was reported missing in action, and later announced to be deceased. It was a shock to her, but she was grateful that Venerable Sister Mary Ida helped her through this difficult time.

continued

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After her First Profession on August 5, 1944, she received her first obedience to St. Casimir, Milwaukee. She taught 50 students in the morning and 50 in the afternoon. She summarizes, "Only God knows the difficulties of that first year, but my love for children helped me through. I stayed for 12 years."

Following this ministry, she was assigned to SS. Cyril and Methodius in Milwaukee and to Holy Rosary School in Pullman, Illinois, each for two years. This was a total of sixteen years as a Kindergarten teacher. When she was assigned to first grade at St. Mary in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, for four years, they teased her about "finally being promoted." This was followed by nine years teaching first grade at St. George, Kenosha.

In 1975 she was transferred to Mt. Carmel, Mount Calvary, to organize a learning center for first through fourth grades at Holy Cross Consolidated. She also took in some reading groups for second grade. Like her mother, Sister Mary Josephine began to experience declining vision, so she resigned from school duty and helped in the convent as a nurses' aide for a few years and then as a phone operator.

As she experienced a progressive loss of sight, she became more and more involved in activities for the visually impaired. "Beginning in 1982, I attended the Wisconsin Lions Camp, where the usual activities associated with camping had the added flavor of clicking canes and getting bumped a little more than usual." Here she was affectionately dubbed, "Mary Jo." She found the summer experience of camping a time of joy.

Following camp life, she realized how beneficial a support group would be to carry on friendships. Consequently, she became involved in the Visually Impaired Support Group of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. She served terms of office as president, vice-president and secretary. In the mid 1980s, she asked a friend to teach her Braille, which was a challenge she enjoyed. She also joined the Badger and Midwest Associations for the visually impaired, in conjunction with the American Council of the Blind

The Mt. Carmel Community at Mt. Calvary was her home for 27 years. She loved the beauty of God's creation surrounding the place and God's presence was there so palpable. She wove baskets and rugs for the gift shop, worked in the kitchen and took her turn at the switchboard. During that time, she celebrated her 50th jubilee with her family, friends and the community at Mount Carmel. 10 years later on May 21, 2004, they gathered again for her diamond jubilee.

Sister Mary Josephine has said, "It is an honor to be an SSND and continue Christ's mission at Mt. Carmel through my ministry of prayer, presence and service." Her favorite prayer was, "Dear Lord, I do not ask that thou should give me some high fame or noble deed, but only this: that hand-in-hand a little child and I may enter in." Now, because Sister Mary Josephine was unwavering in her trust in God, she is now in the loving embrace of Jesus.

By Sister Elise Zettel

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