

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER MARIE JOHN TOOMEY April 27, 1927—November 9, 2019



We wish to express our sympathy and prayers to John and Joe and their families. It is wonderful to have so many of you here with us. Thank you for coming.

Marie Catherine Toomey was born to John Joseph Toomey and Marie Catherine Inlow on April 27, 1927 in Altoona. She was the oldest of three siblings: Sarah Jane Lear and twin brothers, John Edward Toomey and Joseph Cornelius Toomey.

Marie attended Catholic grade school and high school in Altoona. She began to think about becoming a sister in fourth grade. After helping her Mom with her little brothers, her dream was fulfilled when she entered the Sisters of Charity of Hill on September 8, 1946.

Sister Marie John received a bachelor's degree in Music from Seton Hill and Master of Music Education from Duquesne University. She taught music in the elementary and high schools of the Pittsburgh and Altoona Dioceses.

She loved teaching at Canevin and Boyle High Schools. At Canevin, she had five different choruses. One of her happy memories was the time her mother and father attended a performance, and the principal, Father Henry, introduced them to the audience.

Sister wrote that it was a joy and a privilege to work with the students at Boyle High School. She has heard from many of them telling her how music had a profound influence on them.

One of her students from Saint Philip Elementary School in Crafton kept in touch with her. He is a doctor in Philadelphia and came to cantor for her Golden Jubilee Mass. When he returned home he began taking piano lessons again. She wrote “He continues to tell me how much music has meant to him throughout his life.”

Not only was Sister Marie John was a wonderful music teacher, she was also an excellent religion teacher. Father Richard Conboy, principal at Bishop Boyle High School, wrote “I am proud of your work in music, but I stand in awe of what you have been able to do in the face of intolerable odds with our religion program.”

When thinking of this reflection I looked up adjectives describing one of Sister’s favorite composers. The ones I think that can also describe Sister Marie John are: skillful, gentle, sensitive, musical, gifted.

She could also be stubborn and I’m sure the familiar phrase “She’s a musician” has been used.

Sister chose Matthew’s account of the Eight Beatitudes for Liturgy. I have taken the translation from the text of *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. As talented as Sister Marie John was, she was a constant worrier and I feel that this translation speaks to her. After hearing the stories last night, I feel that they do address Sister Marie John.

You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God.

You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then you can be embraced by the One most dear to you.

You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourself proud owner of everything that cannot be bought.

You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being care-full, you find yourself being cared for.

You're blessed when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

Then Sister Marie John you can relax, and as the Psalm says, you can see the Face of God.

Rest in peace my Sister.

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Mary Victor
November 15, 2019*