

Funeral Reflection for Sister Mary Michael Burns

July 18, 1930 – October 17, 2022



Today, we remember and rejoice in the life of Sister Mary Michael Burns, a faithful Sister of Charity. Victoria, an eight-grade student, in her letter of application for a scholarship to Seton La Salle High School perhaps said it best:

In second grade, my religion teacher, Sister Mary Michael, who is a Sister of Charity, was my favorite teacher. She prepared us for the sacraments as no other teacher could. She taught us about Elizabeth Seton, the convent, and her life. Since then, anytime we do a project about a saint, I always choose Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Young Victoria's words, written just a few years ago, capture the life of self-giving and joy that Sister Mary Michael lived in humility, simplicity and charity.

This extroverted, cheerful, happy person was one of 14 children of John Anthony Burns and Stella Gertrude Blatt. They grew up in a large white house in Chicora, PA right across from Mater Dolorosa Church. Many of the family had a nickname, and most of the Sisters in our community didn't know the "real" names: : Father Jack, Phil, Bernard (Sam), Jim (Coone), Tom (Skeeter), Rege, Bob (Boone), Chuck, Mary (Med), Agnes (Min), Pat, Kate, Sister Therese (Gert), and Sister Mary Michael (Gov). The boys all served Mass; the girls were in the choir. The new pastor, Fr. Lawrence O'Connell, wrote: "I am aware that the zeal and the devotion of the Burns family has been instrumental in promoting every activity of the church."

Sister Mary Michael entered the Sisters of Charity in 1948, becoming a teacher usually of the younger children. After earning a bachelor's in Elementary

Education at Seton Hill University, she received a Master's degree in Education at the University of Arizona, Tucson. The list of special courses and workshops is quite long. She served in several schools in Greensburg; Phoenix; Lakewood, California; Pittsburgh; Tucson; Abbeville, Louisiana; Glyndon, Maryland, and from 1983 until 2009 at Resurrection in Brookline in Pittsburgh. In 1988-89 Sister Mary Michael served in South Korea, teaching English. This may have fulfilled a dream noted in her high school yearbook: "I want to be a missionary." Upon return, she continued teaching in Brookline. In 1995, her professional work was recognized when she received the Golden Apple Award given by the Diocese of Pittsburgh for excellence in teaching.

Sister Mary Michael "retired" in 2009 to care for her sister Kate in Chicora. During her time there she was active in the parish. She taught in the religious education program and initiated a thriving vocation effort. When Kate moved to Caritas Christi, it was back to Brookline for Sister Mary Michael where she helped in the kindergarten class and in the school and assisted with parish visiting.

Truly, Sister Mary Michael has always been open to appeal, ready to respond in whatever ways she is most needed.

Clearly, this happy, "holy" person, Sister Mary Michael, offered a great deal to so many. Someone, perhaps another student, once said that Sister Mary Michael is like a magnet which draws happy faces.

Please join me in praying, "Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her."

May she draw us all to be with her in eternity.

Written by: Sister Brigid Marie Grandey

Read by: Sister Patrice Hughes