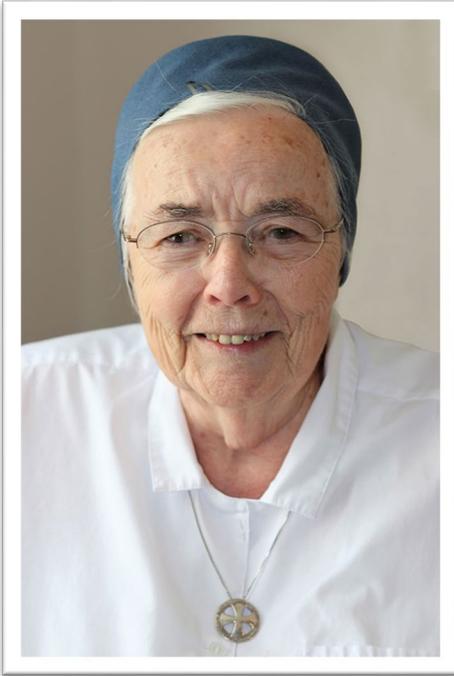


SISTER MARIAN JOSEPH ADAMS, SC

REFLECTION

written by Sister Gertrude Foley, SC



There are two stages in dealing with the death of a loved one. We all speak of missing those who have died. Mourning is a special kind of missing that is characteristic of human beings. At first, we miss the person. We hear that a loved one has died, and even though it is a message we sadly hear often, we never quite make sense of it all. This is the purpose of our rituals: the wake, the vigil, and the Christian Mass of Burial. These rituals help us make sense of it. Especially during the wake our memories and our imaginations get busy with this important sense-making. We use the human way of telling stories to do this. Sometimes a loved one's death follows a long painful illness and our first stories help us to grasp a little of what is happening.

In our dear Sister Marian Joseph's death, we hardly knew she was ill before she was gone. Sister Marian Joseph's passing was what we call first, in our shock, a sudden death. There's a strange sort of gratitude as we say, "Thank God, she didn't suffer." But the physical suffering of illness that might precede death can be brief and unexpected as it was for Marian Joseph whom we knew as healthy and active all her life.

Sister Marian Joseph came from a family of nine children. She must have felt right at home in her group of thirteen when she entered the Sisters of Charity in 1948. And she must have been thrilled when her sister also entered from St. Patrick's parish and became Sister Ann Patrick. Sister Marian Joseph was a senior novice in 1950 when I entered the community with a group of twenty-eight new postulants. Sister Marian Joseph was a genuine big sister to the latest group of twenty-eight high school girls who were sent to the director of novices, Sister Miriam Fidelis, to form in the way of religious life.

When you look at the number of schools where Sister Marian Joseph taught, it seems as if she was teaching everywhere from Arizona to Korea and back to Pennsylvania with visits in between to visit her family in Ohio. In all this, she ever remained the faithful Sister of Charity. These many assignments were not simply signs of her blind obedience, but they were happy and energetic responses that demonstrated her tremendous generosity. They included not only the variety of challenges typical of classroom assignments, but she also served in other ways such as acting as vice principal several times. To prepare herself to facilitate her ministry with our retired sisters in their declining years, Sister Marian Joseph earned a MA degree in Human Development/Gerontology at the University of St. Joseph in West Hartford, Connecticut.

At this point in our common life, however, Sister Marian Joseph continued to teach us how quickly a healthy life can change, change for which we must live getting ready.

Thank you, Sister Marian Joseph for the many years you spent with us, for the fun, the laughter, and the joy. And thank you for an example of death as faithful as your remarkable life.

May she rest in eternal peace. And let us say, "Amen!"