

# Reflection for Sister Marian Grace Brandt

November 9, 1936 – October 17, 2024



Sister Marian Grace knew something was wrong when she entered Our Lady of Perpetual Help School to begin her day as principal. First, the Scottsdale school was empty. Then, she heard the familiar “Whop Whop” sound of helicopter blades.

Moments later, she saw her students outside and a helicopter waiting to pick her up, a combination birthday/Principal’s Day surprise from her students.

This time, a higher power may have played a role, “I got to sit up front, and the ride was real smooth,” she said.

“The joke around here now is - can you top this?” said Sister Marian Grace who had been treated to a hot-air balloon ride by her students three years ago.

The one-hour balloon ride gave her a bird’s eye view of the McDowell Mountains and a spectacular swoop over

Canyon Lake. Two teachers, Sister Barbara Miller and Melissa Lee, won a straw poll to go along. Students pitched in \$1 each to pay for the flight.

In a reflective mood, Sister Marian confided, “While I am aware that the number of Sisters of Charity has diminished, the Charism of St Elizabeth Seton, our foundress, has continued to permeate the daily life of the parish and school. Her love of the poor and her efforts to educate children and families is very evident here.” A book of prayer intentions in the office helped school community members pray for each other’s needs.

Sister Marian shared, “I personally have been rewarded by seeing many of the first graduates of the school become leaders in this parish and other parishes. I see the fruits of our labors when I interview Graduates bringing their babies for Baptism.

“I will always have fond memories of my time here which include: the celebration of sacraments, a Hot Air Balloon Ride, Family Roller skating, shooting baskets at lunchtime, and a fun experience with the Steelers’ Dan Rooney”; who was in town preparing for their Super Bowl game. As he looked for a church for his Father who attended daily Mass, he noticed a building at OLPH with a banner welcoming the Steelers. Upon further investigation, he found a whole school of fans. The sisters were invited to welcome the team buses when they pulled into a hotel just down the street.

OLPH teacher Sue Corrao called Sister Marian “the unifier of the staff.” During lunch, she would often shoot hoops in the schoolyard where the students could watch her from the ramada and keep count. When she made a basket, the students cheered. If she missed, they would express their disappointment with resounding groans of sympathy.

Sister Marian Grace Brandt walked into her eternity on October 17, 2024, in her 70<sup>th</sup> year of religious life. She was preceded in death by her parents, Joseph and Mary Grace Gallagher, and her brother Joseph. She is survived by her nieces, nephews, cousins, and her religious congregation. Sister Marian Grace entered the Sisters of Charity on September 8, 1954, from St Mary Magdalen in Homestead. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Latin from Seton Hill University and a master's degree in Latin from the University of Pittsburgh. Her ministry focused on education for forty years. She served in schools in the Greensburg, Pittsburgh, and Phoenix dioceses as well in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She served as vice principal at St. Paul School, Greensburg, and Greensburg Catholic Middle School, Carbon. Sister Marian Grace also served as principal of St Kieran, Pittsburgh, and St Regis School, Trafford. She then traveled to Arizona where she was principal at St. Theresa School, Phoenix, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, Scottsdale, where she ministered for nineteen years.

We ask your blessing upon our sister, Marian Grace, as she leaves us on her journey.

*Be her ever-near companion, O Holy Guide of Travelers. And spread the road before her with beauty and adventure.*

*May all the highways ahead of her, be free of harm and evil.*

*May she be accompanied by your angelic spirits and messengers,*

*As were the holy ones of days past.*

*On this trip may she take with her as part of her traveling gear, a heart*

*Wrapped in wonder with which to rejoice in all she will meet.*

*Along with the clothing of wonder, may she have room in her luggage*

*For a mystic map by which she can find the invisible meanings*

*Of the events of this journey.*

*Always awake to your Sacred Presence, O Loving and Compassionate God,*

*May she see in all that happens to her, the mystery of your holy plan and your love.*

We close with the blessing of Sister Marian Grace and the Sisters of OLPH's extended to visitors.

(sing the following) *May the blessing of the Lord be upon you, the blessing of*

*The Father and the Son, and may the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of God, be with you all your days.*

- Reflection given by Sister Marie Theresa Rishel