

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER ANNA MARIE MILLER

April 28, 1925–March 19, 2014



On the occasion of her 50th Jubilee 19 years ago, Sister Anna Marie commented that her life-long goal was "To walk with God, to make the world more beautiful, more just and more peaceful." That journey took her to schools in Pittsburgh, Charleroi, Carnegie, Apollo, Greensburg, and Maryland where she served as a first grade teacher or principal. Of course, there were additional tasks such as training altar boys. One day in Charleroi she met the altar boy who had served the Mass she had just attended—and we all know how meticulous she was about her own appearance—she told him his shoes looked scruffy and that he should use some elbow grease on them. Puzzled, the fourth grader said, "We don't have any of that at home."

Wherever Sister's mother got her supply, it left a lasting impression on Sister Anna Marie who left parents John Miller and Collette Berkmyer, and siblings Mary Margaret and Bill to enter the Sisters of Charity on January 1, 1945. All have pre-deceased Sister; Bill died just two weeks ago. Sister was very close to several nieces and nephews who share her loss with our Sister of Charity family.

Sister Anna Marie's professional preparation for teaching included a B.S. in Education from Seton Hill College and an M.Ed. in Elementary Education from Duquesne University. Workshops and conferences provided continuing education. Her gentleness and kindness in the classroom made a lasting impression. Notes were sent to her from a Saint Luke's class reunion many years after she taught there—"You were my idol." "I have taught first grade and I just hope I was half as good as you." Sister taught there for three years, 1948–1951!

Sister Anna Marie's journey brought her back to Greensburg in 1992 to create visual displays of the community's history, for jubilees, assemblies and celebrations, and for the Assumption Hall Christmas sale. She helped in the Development Office with the Capital Campaign and the Annual Fund Drive. But there was an increasing awareness of her unique artistic talent, especially in adapting the environment artistically—in other words, "ambiance".

In 1995, preparations for the 125th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of the community honed Sister Anna Marie's "ambiance" skills, and it wasn't long before she was appointed Supervisor of Environment and Interior Design for the new building, Caritas Christi.

Everything inside or outside this building carries Sister Anna Marie's "ambiance" fingerprints—from carpets to drapes, paint to picture frames, dishes to chairs, tile floors to tables, altar vessels to holy water font, rose bushes to evergreens, the donor recognition board to the statuary in the atrium. She even planned a different decorative motif for each room in the Elizabeth Seton Care unit. She became Caritas Christi's first sacristan and created floral displays that enhanced the already inherent beauty of the chapel.

In looking at Caritas Christi, we are reminded of a remark by the poet, John Keats, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever!" Sister Anna Marie did reach her life-long goal—she walked with God and made a thing of beauty at Caritas Christi.

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
~ Sister Mary Nolan, SC
March 24, 2014*