

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER MARIE ARTHUR HAMILTON

December 3, 1932–August 15, 2014



1950 was a Holy Year in the Church. On September 8 of that year, 28 young women entered the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, the largest group of postulants our congregation had ever received. Margie Hamilton, from Saint Rosalia Parish in Greenfield, and a graduate of Elizabeth Seton High School was among them, the second youngest in our group. Sister Miriam Fidelis referred to us as “The Holy Year Group.”

Margaret Ann was born at Mercy Hospital, December 3, 1932, the daughter of Arthur and Anna Carney Hamilton, and was baptized in the hospital chapel on December 11, 1932. She was one of six Hamilton children, 3 sons and 3 daughters—Arthur, Mary Virginia, Richard, Charles, Margaret, and Nancy. Margie attended Saint Rosalia School through the ninth grade, and then transferred to Elizabeth Seton High School in 1947, graduating in 1950.

When Margie applied to enter the Sisters of Charity, her pastor, Father Matthew Coghlan, assured Mother Maria Benedict that “Margaret Ann Hamilton. . . has always been an exceptionally good Catholic girl and should make a good nun.” Father George Haber, who taught Margie at Elizabeth Seton, was a little more specific: “I have known, observed, and taught her during her high school years at Elizabeth Seton, and it is my opinion that she possesses all the discernible indications of a religious vocation. I think she will become a very valuable member of your community, and I am happy to recommend her without qualification.” Margaret received the habit in March 1951 and her religious name, Sister Marie Arthur.

After leaving the novitiate in 1953, Sr Marie Arthur taught in many of our elementary schools, mostly in the east, although she spent one year at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Scottsdale, which she loved. When things began to change in our ministries, she also taught for nine years at Saint Francis Xavier School on the North Side and for two years at Saint Wendelin in Carrick. In 1991, she began to work as a customer representative for the PNC Financial Corporation, a position she held until 1998. An interesting note in her history of ministry is the one year she worked as the administrator of Holy Savior Cemetery in Gibsonia! From 1999 to 2006, Sister Marie Arthur served in the billing department of the Seton Day Care Center and the Suzuki Music Program in Brookline. Through the years, she spent many years in some financial ministry in the community.

Two letters in Sister Marie Arthur’s file reveal to us some idea of her apostolic spirit. One is a letter she wrote to Mother Victoria. She described some of the physical challenges she was experiencing in Arizona—allergies, colds, infections. However, she writes, “I have missed just two days of school.” After this report, she continues, “Mother, I do like the West. I particularly

like it in Scottsdale. . . My schedule was difficult at first as Sister asked me to teach modern math in 7th and 8th grades and it was all quite new to me. This, too, is unfolding nicely. We have wonderful visual aids and equipment of all sorts, so this is fine now. The children here are lovely. It is quite a pleasure to work with them. I also have the pleasure of teaching the music in both the 7th and 8th grades, and this is a joy to me—also one fifth grade music.” She goes on to say that she was accepted for the Master’s program at Arizona State University. Finally, she writes, “So, Mother, while there has been much physical suffering, there have been rewards, too. I’m confident that the doctor will help me. I want to stay here. I suppose one can’t have everything.”

A second letter in her file is one written to Sister Baptista, by the principal at Saint Francis Xavier School, inviting Sr Baptista to visit the school. She wrote: “Sister Marie Arthur has been a delightful member of our faculty and a good friend. Her sincere dedication to Catholic education is evident in all of her work with the students. She is also a fine example to the faculty. I am grateful for her contributions to this school community. I am also grateful to the Sisters of Charity for her presence among us.” Later, she wrote to Sister Jean Augustine: “We are very pleased to have Sister Marie Arthur on our faculty. She is a dedicated, excellent teacher, devoted to the children and to the parish. We are very fond of her.”

What I think we all loved about Marie Arthur was her sense of humor and her ability to capture situations in a few words with her Irish wit. One of my favorites was how she identified a particularly talkative person: “Gert, she could talk water uphill!” Often, she would add, “You think I’m awful, don’t you?” And I would respond, “No, Marie, I think you’re honest.”

Sister Marie Arthur is the third of our Sisters to die within a short time. Like Sister Pat Best and Sister Antonine, Sister Marie Arthur was an example in our midst of what everyday fidelity to our vocation as Sisters of Charity looks like. Thank you so much, Marie (Margie) for 64 great years of companionship on the journey. We love you, and we will sorely miss you.

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Gertrude Foley, SC
August 19, 2014*

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