

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER LOUISE DE MARILLAC COYLE

July 17, 1927–October 20, 2017



Good morning and welcome again to this celebration of the life of our sister, Sister Louise de Marillac. I especially extend my welcome and sympathy to Virginia and the nephews and nieces of Sister who are with us today, and send my sympathy to those who were unable to join us. Sister Louise de Marillac had a deep love and concern for her family and I know she greatly appreciated your support throughout her years as a Sister of Charity.

As I began to prepare this reflection, I tried to think back to September 8, 1951, when eighteen of us arrived at Seton Hill to begin our journey into the community of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Grace Edith Coyle was the senior of the group. I suspect it was a difficult adjustment for her and five of the others who were older and had much more life experience. As the years have passed, I often wonder how we managed to meld as a group with differences in age, experience, culture. We come today to bid farewell to our senior.

Grace Edith Coyle was born on July 17, 1927, the ninth of ten children, of Peter Joseph Coyle and Marguerite McGregor Coyle. Grace and her siblings, seven sisters and two brothers, called Carnegie their home and Saint Luke Church their parish. Grace attended Saint Luke Elementary and High School. After graduation, she worked from 1945 until 1951 as a bookkeeper at the S. H. De Roy Jewelry Store in Downtown Pittsburgh. Some of us from Pittsburgh might remember the store on Fourth Avenue with the large spinning diamond.

Grace did not inform her parents of her intention to join the community until two weeks before her entrance. Although supportive of her

decision, this caused her father some concern so he hid a dime in her suitcase in case she wished to call home. I do not know where the dime is now but I know she never used it.

Grace received the habit and the name Sister Louise de Marillac on April 20, 1952. (Incidentally, her mother never liked her name and was very vocal about it.) She was the first novice to pronounce vows in the new chapel at Assumption Hall, a fact of which she was particularly proud. She wrote her mom and dad about the event.

“Tonight we received the most wonderful news. We are going to be the first group to make vows in the Assumption Hall Chapel. It is wonderful!”

She continued the letter by announcing the time of the Mass as 8:30 a.m., and warning them,

“Come a little early as the chapel is not too large.”

She also gave them advice on who else to bring. She reminded them,

“Also, don’t be lettin’ any of the ‘wee ones’ at home.”

Reading this old letter from the past opened a page for me of a simple young daughter sharing her excitement and happiness with her dear parents. As one of the younger members of the group, I saw Louise as quiet, very private, and sure of what she needed to do. While she certainly was a very private and reserved sister, her letter demonstrated another side of Louise.

Sister Louise de Marillac began her ministerial life teaching in the primary grades. She served in schools in the Altoona, Greensburg, and Pittsburgh dioceses. She wrote of her teaching ministry:

“The teaching profession is an experience of bringing all people, young and old, to a richer understanding of unity and of God. It is a very enriching profession, especially with the Sisters of Charity.”

However, in 1972, Sister Louise directed her many talents and interests in a new way when she began serving in several capacities at Assumption Hall. She labored there for 22 years serving as driver, switchboard operator, council member, activities director, and a ceramics crafter. Louise called ceramics “a great feature of my life.” When all of the sisters moved to various residences during the diaspora, Louise worked with ceramics while residing with one of the displaced groups at Greensburg Faculty House. In 1999 with the completion of Caritas Christi, she moved to Doran Hall and retired there in 2000.

Louise also enjoyed other opportunities to learn and travel. She attended the 1991 Catholic Institute for Holocaust studies at Yad Vashem in the Holy Land from June 23 to July 14, 1991, and was a member of a pilgrimage of descendants of the very fruitful family tree of Julia Covert and John B. McGowan. John and Julia had fourteen children and from that lineage, there are numbers of priests and religious sisters. A cousin who was very proud of this fact organized the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Seven religious sisters, some directly related or related by marriage joined the group. Of these, Sister Louise was one four Sisters of Charity in the group. Sisters Mary Gertrude and Mary Joseph McElhinny, and Vivien Linkhauer were also on the pilgrimage.

Proud of her Irish heritage, Louise also traveled to Ireland and she was able to increase her deep devotion to our Mother Ma by making two trips to Medjugorje. She also visited the Shrine of the Blessed Mother in Canada.

The last several years have not been easy for Louise. As a very private person, she found it difficult to share her physical needs with others who were not family. It was difficult to leave behind her ceramics and her other art expressions.

She cared deeply for her family, and during her life, she nursed many of them in their declining years. She also missed the deep bond she shared

with Cass in her home in Dormont and when she moved to the Little Sisters.

We now can imagine the fine reunion occurring as Louise, Grace, Deanie, joins her many loved ones in God's eternal home.

She wanted the "Old Rugged Cross" sung at the end of this service. We will not sing it, but perhaps this verse will do.

*To that old rugged cross I will ever be true,
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then he'll call me some day to my home far away,
Where his glory forever I'll share.*

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

Farewell, Louise. Please be pray that we who have walked with you may be faithful until death."

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Louise Grundish, SC
November 4, 2017*