

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER M. BEATRICE McQUADE

March 23, 1927—August 3, 2020



This morning we join together in prayer as we bid our earthly farewell to Sister Beatrice McQuade, a woman who joined the congregation on September 8, 1945 at age 18. As I began to write this reflection, I wondered if Mary Therese had any idea or vision of the life that was ahead. This September 8, 2020 she would have joined us for our annual Jubilee celebration for her 75th Anniversary. (This date is uncertain due to the pandemic.) Now she joins her sisters in her heavenly home.

Mary Therese McQuade was the eldest of the seven children (four boys and three girls) of Bridget Connelly and Joseph McQuade, both immigrants to the United States. The family lived on Delmar Way in Swissvale and were very active members of Saint Anselm Church. Mary Therese and her siblings attended Saint Anselm School.

For a young woman who spent the first 18 years of her life in Swissvale and a few years as a postulant and novice at Seton Hill, the opportunities ahead might have seemed unsurmountable; but it seems she was ready comply with that which Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton asked of her daughters, "Be prepared to meet your Grace."

From 1948 until 1967, Sister Beatrice accepted assignments in primary grades of schools throughout the Pittsburgh diocese. She served at Saint Mary Magdalen, Homestead, St Luke's, Carnegie, St Philip, Crafton, Resurrection in Brookline, Saint Kieran, Lawrenceville, as well as in Holy Cross, Youngwood, and St Simon and Jude, Blairsville (while they were still part of the Pittsburgh Diocese). In 1967, she worked at Saint Stephen School in Hazelwood as a reading and math coordinator.

Then her serious travels into new adventures began in 1968 with a year as an exchange teacher in Lafayette, Louisiana. From 1972 until 1976, she again served in Louisiana with the Holy Family Sisters in New Orleans while residing with the sisters in their motherhouse.

She returned to Greensburg in 1979 to serve as principal at Saint James School in Apollo. In 1981 she began to serve in the West, first as principal at Saint Mary, Chandler, and then in Scottsdale.

Sister Beatrice, or Sister Bea as she was fondly known, served in our Western missions in many capacities from 1981 until 1996.

In 1996, she traveled to South Korea as an exchange teacher of English at Saint Joseph School in Kangjin, a ministry that she described as a gift and an opportunity. In a letter to the community, she encouraged her sisters, "Come and see. You will not be disappointed." After her time in Korea, she moved East and served in social ministry in West Virginia.

Once back in the Greensburg, Sister Beatrice found new challenges and tried some new ministries. For a while, she was the supervisor of the former Elizabeth Seton Hall. Her love for life and new challenges and ideas came back to Greensburg with her. She was a founding member of the Rosie Posies Group formed at Caritas in 2005 as a new Chapter of the Red Hat Society. Unfortunately, with the death of Sister Beatrice, only one member of the founding group, Sister Janet Neider, remains. However, with their red hats, smiles, and unique ideas, they brought joy to the other sisters, the people at Saint Ann's Home, and the patrons of a few of the ice cream parlors they visited as part of their agendas.

Sister Beatrice believed in an open heart and life-long learning. Along with her degrees, which are listed in her obituary, she attended workshops for subjects that included music, religion, preparing students for the sacraments, assessment, the Myers-Brigg test, and the Enneagram.

This Irish Lass seemed to be ready for anything. She loved to don her green and her red hat.

Yesterday, one of the leaders of the music with children program here at Caritas Christi commented on the Facebook announcement of her death. "Sister Beatrice was a real light to us and the children from music classes this past year. It was an honor to know her."

This last year was a difficult one for Sr. Beatrice. Her body was not up to new adventures or new opportunities, but she still had her Irish smile and her love of life. She truly lived the saying of Saint Elizabeth Seton, "Whatever is your good pleasure, Your blessed Will be done. Let me have but one wish, that of pleasing you." As I look over her life, I think of the many little ones she touched, the classes she offered, the poor she served, the food and clothes she took to the needy, and her willingness to leave her comfort zone for a new uncertain adventure.

Dear Sister Beatrice, Enjoy this final and special journey. May you find in your new life the joy and reward for your openness of heart to whatever the Master had in His plan.

And so, dear Sister Beatrice or Bea as many called you,

*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine gently on your face;
the rains fall softly on your fields, and, until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.*

(Traditional Irish Blessing)

Funeral Liturgy Reflection

Sister Louise Grundish

August 8, 2020