

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER GEORGIA LITZENBURG

May 16, 1937—May 3, 2021



Sister Georgia Litzenberg would have been 84 in “earth years” on May 16, just a few days ago. Now she is in heaven, a place of perfect love, where time doesn't exist, so she will be forever young in God's loving eyes.

Georgia was born in North Oakland, a country area not far from the city of Butler. Her parents were Leottie Alan and Mary Litzenberg. Georgia was the youngest of the family with three older brothers—Arthur, Floyd (also known as Eric) and Weiley—and her sister, Kathleen. Growing up in Oakland Township created in Georgia a lifelong appreciation and love of country living.

Georgia's oral history reveals happy memories of her family and childhood. She enjoyed grade school and high school, remarking on what a good education she received at Butler High School with very dedicated teachers. As she was growing up, she met Sister Margaret Gerald Graham in the summers when Sister Margaret Gerald was visiting her family in North Oakland. During Georgia's high school years, Sister Margaret Gerald would talk to her about the life of a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill focusing on the idea of service—serving God and the Church by being a Sister of Charity. This idea of service appealed to the teenaged Georgia who had already come to the desire to be of service with her life.

Sister Margaret Gerald invited Georgia to attend a vocation retreat at Seton Hill College (now University) as a sophomore in high school. Georgia liked it so much that she went back to the retreat in her junior and senior years also. There she met and became good friends with Joan Canon and both decided that they would indeed follow the call of Christ and become Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Georgia noted that Mother Claudia's calm and kind

manner also motivated her to become a Sister of Charity. Georgia's own mother was happy because she thought Georgia would be able to come home in the summers!

In 1956, Georgia entered the Sisters of Charity with 20-some other young women. During the novitiate year, Georgia worked on the third floor of Assumption Hall. One day, she delivered a food tray to Sister Dolores Cupps' room. The food on the plate was peas and carrots. Sister Dolores was not happy and said she was not going to eat the peas and carrots because she didn't like them.

Georgia pleaded with her to eat the peas and carrots and said, "Some people don't even have peas and carrots to eat." She then added, "Your nickname is Dolly Cupps," and Sister Dolores laughed and said she would eat the peas and carrots. Georgia was delighted that she got Sister Dolores to laugh and to eat the peas and carrots! Was this a sign of Georgia's future caring ministry?

As a Sister of Charity, she was happiest when missioned to country area schools and parishes. From 1956 until 1972, Sister Georgia taught in elementary schools in the Greensburg Diocese, the Pittsburgh Diocese and the Tucson Diocese, as well as in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, having graduated from Seton Hill College with a bachelor's degree in education and social studies.

Georgia moved on to religious education because she saw a need in the Church for it. She received a master's degree in religious education from LaSalle College. From 1972 until 1993, Georgia served as Director of Religious Education in the Greensburg and Pittsburgh Dioceses, the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese in West Virginia, the Raleigh Diocese in North Carolina, and Jackson Diocese in Mississippi. This country girl got around!

When Georgia left Mississippi, she asked for and received permission for a four-month sabbatical. During her sabbatical time of prayer, study and reflection, and after consultation with Community leadership, Georgia felt called to serve as a hospital chaplain. She completed her studies locally and became a board certified hospital chaplain, went to St. Mary's, PA, and was employed as Director of Pastoral Care at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center

(later named Elk Regional Health Center) for six years where she provided loving, joyful and compassionate care to all the patients and their families.

By this time in her life, Georgia wanted to be closer to her Sister of Charity family and to her own family so she returned to Greensburg. She was not able to find hospital work so she became Director of Religious Education at Saint Columbkille Parish in Imperial for one year. She then was hired at Saint John Church in Delmont and Saint Mary Church in Export as pastoral minister, serving the parishioners with great love, joy and compassion. She also reached out to pastors of other faiths in the ministerium. She believed that having good relationships with the other pastors would bring about a spirit of ecumenism which would enhance ministry and enable the Spirit of Christ to prevail there and in the world. After five years, Georgia ended her active ministry by going on to volunteer at Westmoreland Manor and serving the residents there trying to bring laughter and compassion into their lives.

Around this time, Georgia's hearing became a problem and continued to worsen. Hearing aids helped at first but later, not so much. Georgia was an extrovert and gregarious, so these traits helped Georgia to continue to try to be part of conversations in daily life even though she couldn't clearly hear what was being said. I can't imagine how hard it must have been for her. Her trust in God and belief that Jesus walked and talked with her was a blessing. She said she could hear Him.

At the time of her 50th Jubilee, Georgia said, "Religious life has been a blessing for me. Knowing that God is ever-present gives me strength, courage, and, most of all, love." Thank you, Georgia, for sharing life with us as a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill and for being part of our group. We love you and will miss all the ways you touched our lives, our dear Butlerite! We look forward to seeing you again in heaven, a place of perfect love. Recently, that was how you described heaven, Georgia! A place of perfect love!

Funeral Liturgy Reflection

Sister Mary Helen O'Donnell

May 18, 2021