

Reflection: Sister Carmelita Miele

September 14, 1933 – September 21, 2023



Sister Carmelita was born on September 14, 1933 in Mt. Pleasant, PA. This small town had a strong Catholic identity with four ethnic churches, St. Bernardine, *Italian*, St. Joseph, *Irish*, Transfiguration, *Polish*, and Visitation, *Slovak*. Sister Carmelita grew to appreciate the ethnic diversities in the community.

Sister Carmelita's parents, Joseph and Maria, were both born in Italy and were married there. They immigrated to the United States and made their home in Mt. Pleasant. They had three sons, Felix, Jerry, and Joseph. And two daughters, Catherine and Carmela, Sister Carmelita.

When Sister Carmelita went to first grade, she met Sister Mary Edna Trexler, S. C., who taught her sister Catherine, two years earlier how to speak and understand English. Catherine passed this knowledge on to her little sister, Carmela, so she found it easier to grasp English when she entered the first grade. Carmela cherished Sister Mary Edna as a lifelong mentor and believed that she was what a Sister of Charity should be and become.

After high school, Carmela became a catechist at St. Bernardine Parish where she met Sister Mary Helena Klein, who also taught catechism there. She invited Carmela to consider a call to religious life. Carmela responded to this invitation and Sister Mary Helena became Carmela's sponsor for entrance into the Sisters of Charity. She entered the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill on January 1, 1955. After her postulancy, she became Sister Carmelita.

Sister Carmelita earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Seton Hill University. She completed a three-year summer program at Seton Hill and received a Certificate of Religious Studies. She taught for thirty years in every elementary grade level in the dioceses of Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Washington, D. C., and Tucson, Arizona. She spent a year as an exchange teacher with the Sisters of the Holy Family in Louisiana. She also served her parishes as an RCIA team member and trained the parish altar servers. Her summer ministries included census taking, vacation Bible School, and home visitations.

She and her family experienced unspeakable pain in November of 1978 when her brother Jerry and others were taken hostage in Iran. She and her family suffered from that moment until the hostages were released just before President Reagan's inauguration in January of 1981. As a community, we prayed with Carmelita and her family for Jerry and the other hostages and with them we were overjoyed when they

were finally released. Carmelita expressed her delight with the words, "Easter came early (for us) that year!"

In 1986 Sister Carmelita became co-manager of Maryhouse, a home for homeless and low-income women, established in the former Resurrection Convent in the Brookline area of Pittsburgh. Later, after recovering from an illness, she became co-manager of the Seton Hill University Bookstore. After the death of her mother in March of 1991, she accepted a position as Director of Religious Formation/Faith Formation at Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarksburg, West Virginia, where she worked for thirteen years. While serving on the Board of Clarksburg West Virginians for Life, Sister Carmelita shared the Catholic Social Teachings of the Church with that group. Her presentations were received well and welcomed by the others in the group.

Sister Carmelita loved working in Clarksburg. On June 20, 2004 there was a big celebration in Clarksburg in her honor. It was declared Sister Carmelita Day in Clarksburg. In a special ceremony prior to her leaving West Virginia, she was celebrated as a "favorite daughter" and given a Key to the city of Clarksburg. Sister Carmelita loved working there and she was loved by those with whom she worked. The key to the city that she received is now preserved in the Archives of the Sisters of Charity.

When Sister Carmelita returned to Greensburg, she began to volunteer on the Pastoral Care Team at Jeannette District Memorial Hospital. She also volunteered at the St. Vincent DePaul store in Greensburg. For a time she served as catechist at St. Sylvester Parish in Slickville. During those years she resided first at Doran Hall and then at Caritas Christi. She continued her active ministry at the Adult Day Care Center at Monahan Center by serving the men and women who were admitted to that program.

Sister Carmelita was a friendly, kind, compassionate soul who was deeply committed to her religious vocation and to helping others. When she reflected upon the diversity of her ministries, she seemed to recognize the guidance of the Holy Spirit. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's exhortation to be "Children of the Church" is one that Sister Carmelita took to heart. I truly believe that those words of Mother Seton guided her in whatever task she undertook as catechist, educator, director of religious education and faith formation. She was not shy about sharing her ideas about her faith and welcoming those with questions or comments about it. She supported all those with whom she worked, children and adults, with heartfelt love and care.

We salute you, Sister Carmelita, and commend you for the good that you shared with so many, for how generously you met their needs, and for the simple, humble, charitable way in which you lived your life as a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill. We are saddened by our loss and will miss your presence among us. We love you and present you to the Lord most high.

Sister Virginia Pascaretta