



## **SISTER GRACE MARIE SAMBLANET, OLVM**

Sister Grace Marie had been failing the last few days although she was aware of people being with her. She would often smile and open her eyes when someone spoke to her and even had an extra chair brought into her room for when she had visitors. At 7:42 a.m. on January 4, 2015, the Feast of the Epiphany, she slipped into the hands of God, her journey being complete and like the magi, she laid her gifts at the manger.

Sister Grace Marie was born in Louisville, Ohio, on July 31, 1929, to Vincent Samblanet and Florence Bishop Samblanet. She was the sixth of seven children and was baptized Dorothy Ann on August 4, 1929, at St. Louis Church. Her parents and one sister, Esther Ruppel, preceded her in death. Her three brothers, Paul of North Canton, Ohio, Robert of Sarasota, Florida, and Joseph Samblanet of Louisville, Ohio, and two sisters, Ruth Gulling of Louisville, Ohio, and Alice Vignos of North Canton, Ohio, survive sister.

Sister Grace Marie entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on September 6, 1951, and made first vows on August 5, 1954. Her first mission was in Ida, Michigan, and her last mission outside of Victory Noll was in Chicago, Illinois. She also served in California for 23 years. She returned to Victory Noll in 1980 to serve as Vocation director and then moved to Chicago. Sister returned to Victory Noll in 1996 to minister as the Holy Family Healthcare Center Coordinator, retiring in 2006 to enjoy her painting and photography.

Throughout her missionary life, Sister Grace Marie used her artistic talent in her approach to life and ministry. She saw her missionary life as a blank canvas in 1951, and over the next 63 years God used colorful missionary ministry to fill the canvas with vivid hues of Church, Community and Civic events along with movement to shape, form and create the woman she became. In her religious education classes she used art to teach, and when she ministered in the nursing homes and in the Cook County jail she used her art to comfort and encourage. She never stopped seeing the world through the eyes of the artist.

Sister Grace Marie was missioned in Chicago for 10 years. At St. Boniface Parish, she ministered in evangelization outreach and pastoral ministry. She then moved on to be the activity director at St. Joseph's Home, where she utilized her artistic talents with the residents. She attended workshops in the benefits of music therapy, creative arts and Alzheimer's, dance and movement, and many more to enhance her involvement with the elderly. She truly believed in the mind-body-spirit connection for holistic health. She would also do pastel drawings of the residents that would then hang in the hallways of St. Joseph's home to the delight of residents, visitors and employees. One of these portraits, her favorite, she brought with her to Victory Noll and was hung in her room.

She also served as a tutor in the PACE program for education in the Cook County correctional system using her spiritual and outreach knowledge with those she tutored. During lunch time with the students she would teach basic art or do portraits of them,

which they could give to their family members or significant other. These lunch time drawings were special to Sister Grace Marie and she would share stories about the men whom she drew.

In 1996, she returned to Victory Noll to serve as the HF 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Coordinator. She used her knowledge and talent from her work in Chicago to enhance the lives of the sister residents. She instituted the visiting dog program, painting classes for the sisters, and started the Friday morning spiritual videos. She was always available to take photos at events and photos of Victory Noll in all the seasons. Many of her photographs became cards for the craft case. After she herself became a cancer survivor, she started a cancer support group to help other sisters learn to accept the "new normal." In 2012 she received the Eunice Coates Spirit Award for her ability to inspire others who are living with or surviving cancer.

After she retired from being the Holy Family coordinator, she spent time doing her favorite thing — painting. Some of the co-workers and other people she knew asked her to paint portraits of their loved ones or places that were special to them. She also blessed Victory Noll with her beautiful paintings. Her spirit and presence will always be with us through her paintings that grace the corridors and rooms of the campus.

Sister Grace Marie's niece Vaune Samblanet-Ritchey, and her nephew Kevin Samblanet, were able to be with the community to celebrate both Sister Grace Marie's vigil on Wednesday, January 7, 2015 and her funeral on Thursday, January 8, 2015.

In the funeral liturgy Fr. Dale Bauman made reference to Sister Grace Marie's name, using the definition of grace as being a gift from God. Her gift from God was being an artist and she shared this gift. The word is also the root of gracious and grateful, two other words that describe her. In her own words, "I was willing to use my creative talents gratefully."

Sister Grace Marie, your life was a canvas on which God painted. Just as sunshine brightens the world, so too did your gentle kindness and ability to be with others help to shine God's love on many people throughout your life. May you now enjoy being in the presence of "The Artist" who painted upon your blank canvas.

With peace and blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sister Ginger Downey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Ginger Downey, OLVM