



**SISTER FRANCESCA McGARRY, OLVM,** 94, died in the early morning of February 11, 2020, at Saint Anne Community at Victory Noll in Huntington, Indiana.

Sister Francesca was born in Euclid, Ohio, on April 17, 1925. She was the second child and first daughter of John Joseph McGarry and Frances Wagner McGarry. She was baptized Mary Louise on May 10, 1925, at Holy

Cross Catholic Church in Cleveland, Ohio. Her two brothers, John and Thomas McGarry, and her parents preceded her in death. Her two younger twin sisters, Eileen Shelton and Kathleen Mlakar, survive her.

Sister Francesca often told the story of how she put her letter of inquiry into the mailbox on her way to a New Year's Eve party and then entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters a month later, on February 4, 1946. She made first vows on August 5, 1948. Her first mission was in Los Angeles, California. She later served in the missions in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Colorado and Illinois. Sister Francesca worked mainly in social work and served in many dioceses in that capacity. She served the OLVM Congregation as both Mistress of the Juniors and Dean of Victory Noll Junior College. Later, she served as Vocation Director. Sister Francesca earned a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in 1955 from Siena Heights College, in Adrian, Michigan, and her Master of Social Work degree in 1957 from Worden School of Social Work at Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio, Texas. In the 1990s she helped to start three outreach and ministry centers: Gary (Indiana) Arts Outreach; Julia Center in Chicago, Illinois; and Victory Noll Ministry Center at Victory Noll in Huntington. She also worked with immigrants, refugees, the homeless and those in prison. She returned to Victory Noll in 2016, where she continued to be involved in many social justice activities, including letter-writing and protesting.

In 2005, while serving as the Director of the Victory Noll Ministry Center, Sister Francesca received the Hoosier Hospitality Award from Indiana Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman. The nomination letter stated Sister Francesca "went above and beyond the call of duty to make visitors of all cultures and denominations feel welcome." That statement summed up Sister Francesca and her cheery positive attitude. She was the cheerleader for many issues, events and people, both within the congregation and in the wider civic community. She was always welcoming and wanted to make sure everyone felt not only welcomed but that they "belonged." It was a wonderful ability that served her

well, from her work with Catholic Charities placing children in foster care or for adoption, to working with refugees from Southeast Asia to be resettled in the United States. She always went the extra mile to make sure everyone in the group felt they were in the right place at the right time. The May 1962 issue of Missionary Catechist featured a photo spread of Sister Francesca's work. A caption from under one of the pictures summed up Sister Francesca. It read, "It is a privilege to help dissolve heartaches and mend broken homes. Seeing Christ in all with whom she comes in contact makes her task easier. Very often the victims are wholly innocent." The work of dissolving of heartache and mending broken lives continued to be part of her daily life.

Over the years, Sister Francesca used many different ways to teach people, whether they were children, young adults or adults. She engaged people in creative ways utilizing literature, theatre, music and dance, alongside theology and scripture. When working with different cultures, she invited them to share their native dance and music, and especially their food. Her enthusiasm and love of life meant she was always ready to celebrate.

Always ready to try something new, Sister Francesca saw life as an adventure with new possibilities and potential for growth and discovery. In keeping with the fundamental underpinning of her life, she quoted from John's Gospel, "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full." Sister Francesca lived life to the fullest and because of the joy and enthusiasm she displayed, so did everyone around her.

Her sister, Eileen Shelton, along with other relatives, Brian Shelton, Chuck Shelton and his wife Susan, Sharla Canteri and Andy McGarry, were able to come for both the vigil on Friday, February 14, 2020, and the funeral liturgy and burial on Saturday, February 15, 2020. Several people came from Julia Center in Chicago. Victory Noll Associates and residents of the Huntington community also joined the Sisters to celebrate Sister Francesca's life.

Sister Francesca, your life of service and hospitality here on earth has ended. May you be welcomed into Eternal life with the same joy and graciousness that you welcomed others.

With gratitude and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sr. Ginger Downey O.L.V.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Ginger Downey, OLVM