



SISTER MARY JOSEPHINE MILLER, OLVM

God gently called Sr. Mary Josephine home on July 28, 2013. She peacefully slipped into freedom around 10 PM. I was with her praying for her to release her earthly body into God's loving embrace. When the nurse, Debbie Johnson, came back into the room, there was no heartbeat and she was in the arms of God.

Sister Mary Josephine was 96 years old, being born in Detroit Michigan on October 27, 1916. She was the fourth of 10 children born to Joseph A. and Elsie (Wendland) Miller. She was baptized Josephine Edith on November 5, 1916 at Annunciation Church in Detroit, Michigan. She is preceded in death by six brothers, George, Raymond, Herbert, Richard, Jack and Larry and two sisters, Therese Horen and Rose Desmet. She is survived by one sister, Margaret Dayner of San Jose, California. She is also survived by her Victory Noll sisters with whom she shared life and community with for 78 years.

Sister Mary Josephine entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on February 9, 1935 and made first Vows on March 25, 1938. She ministered in the states of Kentucky, Texas, New Jersey, Utah, California, Indiana and Michigan. She returned to Holy Family Health Care Center in 2005.

Sr. Mary Josephine entered the community at the age of 19. Her dad offered to pay either for her last semester of high school and graduation or for her bus fare to Victory Noll. She chose the bus fare to Victory Noll. She knew she would fit right in to life in community as she was used to living among many people with nine brothers and sisters, sharing space and rotating household tasks. Sister Mary Josephine was well-prepared for her work as cook and baker. Her mother had taught her how to peel potatoes at six years old, and later Mother Cecilia's father had taught her how to bake when he visited the mission where she lived with Mother Cecilia.

Her early ministry years were spent in various places where she loved doing home visiting every morning and teaching religion classes every afternoon. She especially enjoyed the variety of nationalities she worked among and spoke of learning to drive a car from Sister Dorothy Schneiders when she was in Los Banos, California.

Sister Mary Josephine came back to Victory Noll in the fall 1974 to work in the kitchen and in 1977 she became the head cook. She remembered those 4:40 a.m. risings to get breakfast started. She was the last "sister" to be head cook in the old Sacred Heart kitchen. In a farewell note to Sister Mary Josephine from the Chancellor of the Diocese of Salt Lake City on her move back to Victory Noll he wrote, "Enjoy your work at the motherhouse. Their gain is going to be tremendous. Know that you will be in my prayers and Masses and

most of all know that you have my eternal gratitude for all that you did. You certainly made my work easier and I know that I will sorely miss you.”

After “retiring” from the kitchen at Victory Noll, Sr. Mary Josephine spent four years cooking at our house in San Pedro, California before moving to Detroit where she lived and ministered at St. Patrick Senior Center for 16 years. Sister Mary Josephine wrote about St. Patrick’s, “This center reaches out to the elderly and poor, offering them more than just a hot meal once a day. In addition to offering them physical sustenance, they also receive fellowship, love and dignity.” The first seven years she spent volunteering in the kitchen and then later doing other types of volunteering. She enjoyed sharing her faith and offering companionship and support to the residents. She described life at St. Patrick’s as, “everyday is a circus.” And in another place she wrote, “The center is never quiet. I have stage shows every day and at #804 (her apartment) I have the window opera that you will never see on TV. I keep a positive attitude by living one day at a time.”

Father Fahey in his homily reminded us that Sister Mary Josephine died on the day the Church remembers Saint Martha. Like Saint Martha, Sister Mary Josephine was always in the kitchen! They both fed people and gave them nourishment; they also gave of themselves and made professions of faith, belief statements that Jesus was the Christ, God’s anointed. Saint Martha’s profession of faith we heard in the reading chosen by Sister Mary Josephine for her funeral. The other a profession of faith made not only at Sister Mary Josephine’s baptism, also by her life as a Victory Noll sister.

A line from a meditation found in her personal file reads in part. “Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it ever was; there is absolutely unbroken continuity. Why should I be out of your mind because I am out of your sight?” * Sister Mary Josephine, you will never be out of our minds or hearts because you have touched many in ways that only God knows and understands.

Leaving you in the tender care of Jesus and Mary, **



*Carmelite monastery County Waterford, Ireland

**from a letter of Sister Mary Josephine’s

