



SISTER MARY JOAN GINSTERBLUM, OLVM, 102, died on December 29, 2021 at Saint Anne's Community at Victory Noll, Huntington.

Sister Mary Joan was born in Meyer, Iowa, on December 28, 1919, to Anthony Ginsterblum and Amy De Muth Ginsterblum, and baptized Joan Mary on December 29, 1919, at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Meyer, Iowa. Sometime in her early childhood, the family move to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

Sister Mary Joan's parents and four brothers, John, Donald, Richard and Neil Ginsterblum, and her two sisters, Ann Sheridan and Alice Farris, precede Sister in death. One sister, Marian Carroll, survives Sister along with many nieces and nephews, and her Victory Noll Sisters with whom she lived and shared life for 82 years.

Sister Mary Joan entered the Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters on January 25, 1939, and made first vows on August 5, 1941. She ministered as a catechist in California, Colorado, Utah and Arizona, before she became a physical therapist assistant in 1975. After finishing her academic work and receiving her license from the Indiana State Board of Physical Therapy, she began a new way of ministering, this time with her own Sisters in our Holy Family health care facility. She continued in this ministry until she retired in 1998.

Sister Mary Joan listened to classical music while she gently cared for each Sister, helping them to move their joints, rehabilitate from an injury or just stay as active as possible. She continued to update herself by attending workshops and seminars on the latest developments and treatments for those aging or needing rehabilitating therapies. Sister Mary Joan also worked with the Sisters confined to their beds. She would speak to the Sister as she moved their legs and arms, even if the Sister could not respond. She continued to treat them with love and dignity, often blessing them as she finished her treatment.

As was part of her personality, she would stay in contact with significant people from the places she served. An example of this was an invitation she received 41 years after leaving Greeley, Colorado, where she had served in the late 1940s. Sister Mary Joan's ministry was with high school girls. The invitation included the opportunity to see the Holy Father, St. John Paul II, and attend a picnic reunion with many of her former students. She became a true pilgrim by walking the four miles carrying a folding chair, her lunch and, of course, her binoculars to join the more than 200,000 at the outdoor Mass in Cherry Creek Park.

She also had the delight of spending a few days in the mountains watching the western mountain birds before the reunion. At the reunion, she recognized many of her students,

meeting their children and grandchildren. They remembered her and shared stories of how she had made a difference during their difficult teenage years.

During the early 1970s, Sister Mary Joan was asked to give a year of service at Victory Noll. During this time her love of trees and birds took root. She became a member of the Audubon Society, which aided in learning not only about birds but trees as well. She learned the names of each tree on the property. She made tags for each tree including the type of tree and included the name of a member of the congregation.

She especially loved birds and was an avid birder. It was very common to see her walking around the grounds at Victory Noll with her binoculars. Her nephew, Fr. Bill Farris, OFM, shared how she took him on one of her birding adventures and helped him learn how to identify 20-25 different species of birds. Being in nature was a delight for Sister Mary Joan and she named herself "Nature's Caregiver."

Sister Mary Joan was very creative and gifted in many handcrafts, including embroidery and calligraphy. She hand-lettered many thank you notes and invitations for the community. She learned woodcarving, becoming skilled at carving statues and figurines. There are several carvings around Victory Noll and hanging in the Peace garden, although her most ambitious carving, the Peace Pole, is no longer standing. When the top of a blue spruce came off during a windstorm, Sister Mary Joan decided to carve what was left of the tree and it stood in the same place for 30 years, until nature took its course.

In keeping with Sister Mary Joan's love of nature, she had a green burial, which meant services were immediate. The vigil was celebrated on December 30, 2021, and funeral on December 31, 2021. It was a delight to have Sister Mary Joan's nephew, Fr. Bill Farris, OFM, celebrate the funeral. His presence, especially his homily, was deeply appreciated. He spoke of Sister Mary Joan's life through his reflection on the readings and songs she had chosen.

Sister Mary Joan led a long and faithful life, turning 102 the day before she died. May she rest in peace knowing she made a difference in the lives of all those she taught, those she touched through her therapy and those she delighted with her creativity.

We believe God said to Sister Mary Joan, "Welcome home, my faithful servant and beloved daughter."

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 style.

Sr. Ginger Downey, OLVM