



SISTER M. MONICA FATORA
December 23, 1922 - May 29, 2008

I have known Sister Monica for the past fifty-four years. She taught religion and math at Saint John the Baptist during my four years of high school. She was an excellent teacher and a kind mentor to many of the girls, who stayed in contact with her over the years. Incidentally, we were looking forward to hosting her at our 50th graduation anniversary – yesterday. Monica was humble, kind, generous, compassionate, gentle, quiet, joyful, simple, confident, humorous and a very spiritual woman. She always had time for everyone no matter how busy she was. No doubt these attributes grew out of her family life. Her father, John, and her mother, Susan, raised three sons, John, Jerome and Bob, and three daughters, Betty, Maryanne and Margaret, in a strict Catholic tradition. That example fostered three vocations – a Benedictine Monk, Father Joachim (Bob), and two Sisters of Charity, Sister Mary Raymond and Sister Monica.

Sister Monica's vocation to religious life began with a stirring in her heart as a 4th grader and grew with the encouragement of her sister, Sister Mary Raymond. After completing grade school at Saints Simon and Jude Grade School and Blairsville High School, Margaret Fatora applied for admission to the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in February, 1940. When she talked to her pastor, Monsignor F.J. Mueller, to request a letter of recommendation, he told her he didn't approve because of her age. After further discussion, he wrote the letter, put it in a sealed envelope and gave it to her. Curious as to what he had written, Margaret went home, made sure she was alone in the kitchen and steamed open the letter to find:

It is a pleasant and agreeable task to recommend to your consideration for admission to your community, Miss Margaret Fatora, of this parish. Her life has been exemplary, conspicuously fine. Her character is beyond reproach; the reputation of her family is the highest; they are a very fine Catholic household and Margaret, far from the least of the household. I have been reluctant to see her enter religion so young; I have told her so, and why; she sees fit, at the advice of some of your number at least, to override that advice and apply for admission now; be it so, if God so wills it. I have no reason whatever to think that she will be less than an outstanding credit to the community.

Sincerely,
Monsignor F.J. Mueller

In a taped interview for the community archives, Monica commented that she never told anyone about steaming open the letter. Monica entered the community on September 8, 1940.

Degrees from Seton Hill University and the University of Southern Louisiana with additional courses at Yale, University of Pittsburgh and the University of Illinois prepared her for teaching assignments at Saint Joseph, Sharpsburg; Saint Philip's Grade School, Saint John the Baptist High School, Holy Innocents High School, Bishop McCort High School, Elizabeth Seton High School and Seton-La Salle High School. And, after 39 years of teaching, Monica served as the Book Store Manager at Seton-La Salle High School for seventeen years.

Sister Monica experienced one bump in the road of her education at Seton Hill University. She was able to laugh years later when relating the story. In June 1953, she was delighted to walk up onto the stage to receive her diploma. Leaving the stage she opened the diploma cover only to find a blank piece of paper with a note saying, “Your records are incomplete until you fulfill the course in US History this summer.”

A car accident on June 6, 1994, caused Monica several physical problems, limiting her activity for many months – but served as a catalyst for enriching her spiritual life and appreciation of community life. While she recuperated at the Sisters infirmary at Assumption Hall, the caring and concern she experienced for both herself and her mother, who was terminally ill, stimulated a profound appreciation of what Monica called - Charity in Action - which she stressed in her interview for the archives.

Sister Monica was a witness to the Gospel through her compassion, understanding, joyfulness, sincerity and love of God – truly a life of Beatitude. Acclamations from the Sermon on the Mount as expressed by Benedictine Sister Macrina in her book, *Seasons of Your Heart*, are appropriate to consider in remembering the life of Sister Monica:

- ❖ Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependency on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't matter; those for whom the riches of this world just aren't that important.
- ❖ Blessed are those who know that all they are is a gift from God, and so they can be content with their greatness and smallness, knowing themselves and being *true* to themselves.
- ❖ Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment, those who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow.
- ❖ Blessed are those who are hungry for goodness, those who never get enough of God and truth and righteousness.
- ❖ Blessed are the merciful, those who remember how much has been forgiven them, and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others.
- ❖ Blessed are those whose hearts are free and simple, those who have smashed all false images and are seeking honestly for truth.
- ❖ Blessed are the creators of peace, those who build roads that unite rather than walls that divide, those who bless the world with the healing power of their presence.
- ❖ Blessed are those whose love has been tried, like gold in the furnace, and found to be precious, genuine and lasting, those who have lived their belief out loud, no matter what the cost or pain.

Seasons of Your Heart: Prayers & Reflections
Macrina Wiederkehr, O.S.B.

Thank you, Monica for showing us how to live a life of Beatitude.

Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Kathleen McGrady
June 2, 2008