



SISTER CATHERINE LOUISE KNORR

March 20, 1918 - November 23, 2005

“Prepare the Way of the Lord!” These words from Isaiah set the theme for the season of Advent we have just begun. Four days before this Advent the Lord came to Sister Catherine Louise, traveling on a “Way” she had prepared all her life.

Sister Catherine Louise began her pathway to the Lord in Pittsburgh’s South Side and later moved to the Brookline area, then considered a suburb. The daughter of Jacob and Charlotte Tritschler Knorr, she was the third of nine children: James, George, “our Joe,” Monsignor Knorr, Clyde, Dorothy, Sister Mary Rose, Theresa, and Ginny. Theresa and Ginny are with us this evening. Sister Mary Rose who is very ill is with us in spirit, I am sure.

Sister Mary Rose entered the Sisters of Charity in 1938. When Sister Catherine Louise wanted to enter the Community a year later, Father James L. Quinn, remembered fondly by many members of Resurrection Parish, wrote to Mother Rose Genevieve about Sister Catherine Louise; “Her school record was unfailingly good. Her conduct was always exemplary. She has practiced her religion with marked fidelity, confessing weekly or bi-weekly and communicating daily. . . . I recommend her as a good candidate, who will, I confidently believe, become a useful and exemplary member of your Community.” And she did!

Sister Catherine Louise’s pathway led her into the classroom where she worked with children in the intermediate grades for nearly 30 years. Both Advent readings for today speak of children: from Isaiah: “a little child shall lead them” and from Luke: “thou has hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes.” How fitting for Sister Catherine Louise who spent so many patient years loving and teaching fourth and fifth grade students: at Saint Kieran’s; Cathedral, Altoona; Saint Jerome; Saint Irenaeus; Saint James, Wilkinsburg. In 1961, Sister Catherine Louise arrived at Sacred Heart, Shadyside, for a stay of 23 years. She taught fifth grade until 1971 when a new challenge came to her. The principal, Sister Irene Mary, wanted to open a Learning Center for gifted students and asked Sister Catherine Louise to run the Center. The Learning Center opened in September of 1971, and was featured in the PITTSBURGH CATHOLIC. An initiative unusual in that time, the Learning Center expanded to two classrooms and was open to gifted students, students who needed tutoring, to those who wanted to work at their own pace, or who wanted quiet study time. Earphones, recording machines, and speed reading machines were installed. Sister Catherine Louise supervised ten volunteer aides who worked with her.

There came a time when Sister Catherine Louise, due to failing health, had to leave the classroom. She stayed on at Sacred Heart, answering the telephone, taking care of correspondence and doing whatever she could to help in a house of over 30 Sisters. In 1984, she left Sacred Heart and came to Assumption Hall and later to Caritas Christi.

Throughout all the years and all the Missions and all the work, Sister Catherine Louise cherished a deep love for her family. Each one of you was special and important to her. On the program for her Golden Jubilee celebration in 1989, she wrote: “I am thankful for my mother and father, sisters and brothers, sisters and brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews, friends and relatives who were always there when I needed them.”

As I look back at the life of Sister Catherine Louise, and especially the eight years I lived at Sacred Heart with her, I am struck by her generosity and commitment. In her early days in the Community I am told she always volunteered for whatever was needed. Sometimes she even volunteered others—like the time she told Sister Marie Aloysia, the Sister Servant at Saint Kieran’s, that she and Sister Mary Clifford would be glad to wash all the sheets each week—even though Sister Mary Clifford didn’t know a thing about the offer! Sister Catherine Louise was an excellent seamstress and would sew for other Sisters. If she made your habit, you knew it would fit just right. I remember that when she was first approached about going to Assumption Hall, Sister Catherine Louise told me that she asked if there was a job there for her. When she was told that she was needed at the switchboard she agreed to go and did indeed put in almost a full day at the switchboard for several years. She also initiated the community telephone relay calls. At Assumption Hall she worked at crafts for the Christmas Sale and helped with house correspondence, letters executed in her beautiful handwriting. At Caritas Christi Sister Catherine Louise did as much as she could, keeping in touch with people by letter and phone and carefully tending her plants.

One thing that is remarkable about all that she did is that Sister Catherine Louise for many years struggled with poor health. This is a painful cross to bear when others of the same age are well and strong. But Sister Catherine Louise in my memory, was unfailingly pleasant, kind and uncomplaining in spite of her suffering.

I heard a story once of a woman who spent her days picking up glass and other sharp objects from the street so that children who ran barefoot would not cut their feet. Didn’t Sister Catherine Louise do this in so many ways for the children she taught and for the Sisters in the Community she loved? She made the Way smooth.

Sister Catherine Louise did indeed in myriad ways, large and small, “prepare the Way of the Lord and make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God.” May she now travel swiftly on that highway to meet her Lord and her God.

*Funeral Liturgy Reflections
Sister Brigid Marie Grandey
Tuesday, November 29, 2005*