

SISTER JUDE THADDEUS O'DONNELL

December 16, 1915 — January 16, 2006

In September 1933, twenty-two young women arrived at Seton Hill to enter the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity. Although the official entrance date was September 8, three of the young women arrived on the previous day. Among them was Miss Abigail O'Donnell, a member of Saint Paulinus Parish in Clairton, Pennsylvania. By the time the other nineteen postulants arrived, Abigail was feeling quite at home and was busy welcoming and assisting the September 8 arrivals! That was the beginning of her seventy-two years as a very generous and caring Sister of Charity.

As the oldest of the seven children of Leo and Margaret Wall O'Donnell, Sister had early learned to assume responsibilities and to be concerned about the welfare of other people. She was a truly caring and generous person.

Whatever she did, Sister Jude Thaddeus did enthusiastically and thoroughly. Whether she was teaching a class in Spanish, directing a group of choir boys, managing the "Lucky Me" booth at the Summer Festival, or just scrubbing a floor, she did so enthusiastically. Incidentally, Sister had the reputation of being an excellent housekeeper. During the past few days more than one sister has commented that Sister Jude Thaddeus had taught her how to scrub and how to houseclean!

While it is true that Sister was hardworking, it is also true that she was fun-loving and had a great sense of humor. She really enjoyed life!

Because of her beautiful voice, Sister was always a valued member of the sisters' choir at Seton Hill. For one or two summers at the Pius X School of Music in New York, she studied Gregorian Chant which prepared her for her years as director of the boys' choir at the Cathedral of Altoona.

In preparation for her years of teaching, Sister earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from Duquesne University and a Master's degree with a Spanish major at the University of Notre Dame. She had great loyalty to Notre Dame and was a faithful supporter of its football team.

After a few years of teaching in elementary schools, Sister Jude Thaddeus became a high school teacher. In that role she served at Johnstown Catholic High School (now known as Bishop McCort High School), at Saint Luke High School in Carnegie, and at Saint James High School in West End, Pittsburgh. Her final years of teaching were at Seton Hill University where, as a member of the Spanish Department, she served from 1962 until her retirement in 1989.

In 1990, Sister moved from Seton Hill to Assumption Hall, in 1996 to Doran Hall, and in 1999 to our new motherhouse, Caritas Christi.

Although failing health in recent years limited her active involvement in community affairs as had been true in former years, Sister never lost interest in all that concerned the community that she loved and which she had served so faithfully for the past seventy-two years.

In 1933, Sister's pastor, Father Joseph Lonegran, in his recommendation of Miss O'Donnell had stated, "I think that this step is for her good, for the good of your community, resulting in the ultimate good, the honor and glory of God." Surely the record of Sister's many years as a Sister of Charity have proved the wisdom of those words!

Last Monday morning, Sister Jude Thaddeus participated in the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy and received Holy Communion, not knowing that it would be her Holy Viaticum. That afternoon Sister quietly and gently left us as she responded to the final divine call when certainly she must have heard the assuring words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

This evening, dear Sister, as we celebrate your long and dedicated life, we do so in the spirit of prayerful gratitude as we pray in the words of Sacred Scripture. "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord let His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace."

Adiós.



*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Sara Louise Reilly
presented by Sister Vivien Linkhauer
January 20, 2006*