



Sister Mary Noreen Lacey

February 7, 1927 - November 12, 2009

Sister Mary Noreen Lacey entered the congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill on September 8, 1944 from St. Mary Magdalene Parish in Homestead, PA. She was one of 10 children (seven girls and three boys) born to Michael and Nora McDonnell Lacey.

Sister Mary Noreen was so proud of her Irish heritage and she boasted that her parents were from Ireland. She loved singing Irish songs and the wearing of the Green. Did you know that Sister had three cousins in our community: Sister M. Luigi Walsh, Sister Marie Marce Hannon and Sister Teresa Mary Lacey?

Sister Mary Noreen earned a bachelor's degree in education and she taught in the primary grades for almost 14 years in the dioceses of Greensburg, Phoenix and Pittsburgh; she loved teaching little children.

Sister Mary Noreen had a reputation for being a peaceful presence on mission. Sisters remember her calmness, her gentleness and her thoughtfulness. Recreation was wonderful when Sister Mary Noreen was present. She loved playing cards and games and everyone had a great time because Sister knew how to be a real presence to everyone.

Her reputation went before her into Korea. You will hear these same words spoken about her in the reflections given by our Korean Sisters as I share their stories about Sister Mary Noreen.

In 1960, Sister Mary Noreen volunteered to begin a mission in the Archdiocese of Gwangju, Korea. She was one of the four sisters who sailed to Korea on October 6, 1960. Sister spent the next 49 years of her life ministering and teaching the Korean people.

Following Sister Mary Noreen's death in Korea, our Korean provincial superior, Sister Sae Hyang Oh wrote: "Sister Vivien and all the Sisters of the US Province! Greetings from Korea! Here in the Korean Provincial House, we spent several days with sadness. But the days passed so quickly. We can't believe that Sister Mary Noreen is not with us. We still feel her presence everywhere in this house and in our hearts. I would like to share with you what was happening those several days in Korea.

On November 12, 2009, Sister Mary Noreen was transported to the Provincial House from the Cho-Sun University Medical Hospital. We, sitting around her bed, prayed for her and said farewell to her. Finally, she passed away. We then began the funeral preparation. Many people came to the Provincial House to pray for her soul. Her funeral portrait was decorated with beautiful flowers donated by benefactors.

On November 13, the casket rites were done according to the Korean traditional services by Sister Min-ah and Sister Wol Sun. After the rites were completed, all the sisters had the last chance to see her. Sister Mary Noreen was dressed in a special habit made by our Sisters. A beautiful smile was on her face.

On November 14, at 7:30 a.m. the rites of departure by the hearse took place. Sister Mary Noreen was taken from the Provincial House to Yang-San Parish Church accompanied by Sister Marlene (Mondalek) and Sister Sae Hyang. Bishop Hee-Jung Kim who knew Sister for a long time celebrated the funeral Mass. Reverend Yong-Su Lee gave a beautiful homily telling stories and sharing memories of Sister.

A large TV screen showed images of her life. All present had time to reflect on her life again. and to mourn for her past 49 years in Korea. We thanked her. Sister was buried in our cemetery which is located in Dam-Yang Catholic Cemetery. Rev. Yong-Bok Jang led the rites of lowering the coffin in the grave according to the Korean Traditional Customs. The parishioners of Yang-San Catholic Church served meals for the people who participated in the rites.

The weather was so cold but the sunshine was shining in the clouds on our way back home. It reminded us of Sister Mary Noreen's ascension into heaven."

To the Sisters in the United States Province, Sister Sae Hyang said: "I really appreciate all the Sisters of the United States Province who sent warm prayers, condolences and beautiful flowers to us. Finally, I want to say good-bye to Sister Noreen again. Sister Mary Noreen! Thank you and we love you! Please rest in peace! God bless you!"



Sister Son-Ja Lee, former provincial superior and an alumni of St. Joseph School shared in her reflection:

"Sister Yang Noreen, our dearest mother! We know that God is holding your hands to lead you to Him and saying 'It is the time to go.' Nevertheless, we don't want you to leave us now and the time of 49 years that you shared with us is not long enough yet. Your presence in the Provincial House has been like the treasure that we hid. You made us feel comfortable and safe even when we were far away from you.

After my entrance to the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, I had the opportunity to know you deeply. God was the center of your life. You treated everyone with a warm heart and love. We could feel and know God through your pouring love toward us. You were humble, simple, peaceful, easy and patient. You took care of the smallest detail of the heartache of people and cherished every insignificant thing.

My dear Sister! You were a nice enough queen! You had a good memory and were sincere at playing cards. No one was a match for you. You always won but, did you know that in these recent years, we would play cards so that you would win! That card playing was a small way for us to pay you for your love. My dear Sister Noreen, now, it's time to tell you a very important thing. You were a true religious woman. You were not in high positions and you did not possess many things. The only thing important in your life was following Jesus. You were free, satisfied and happy with your daily life with us. Through your life, we learned. You showed that our daily lives centering on God is a blessing and joy. We learned that this daily living is very holy and valuable. Our life focusing on God is enough. Sister Yang Noreen, our dearest mother and good Sister of Charity of Seton Hill, please rest in peace with Sister Mary Agnes (Carey), Sister Jean (Malloy), Father David, Sister Hyun-suk Lee and Sister Jeong-young Kim. May all the deceased welcome you to the heavenly banquet. Pray for us and urge us to love God! Our dearest Sister Yang Sun- He Noreen! A woman of God! Farewell! We were happy with you.

*Memorial Mass Reflection
Sister Judith Laffey
December 13, 2009*