



Sister Mildred Corvi, S.C.
May 1, 1920 – September 3, 2011

Before we reflect on the gift of the life of Sister Mildred Corvi, let me remind you of the encouragement that she used as she began many of her classes.

Imagine that there is a string attached both to your head and to the ceiling above your head. Sit up straight, shoulders back, it's good for your posture and your self-esteem and you will feel better about yourself.

She herself stood tall with her head high, which to some made her appear aloof.

The third of four daughters, Mildred T. Corvi was born on May 1, 1920 in Hoboken, NJ to Lawrence C. and Louise (Frees) Corvi. Her parents, and two sisters, Sister Louise Corvi, Daughter of Wisdom, and Evelyn Kelliher preceded her in death. Her sister, Eileen Lacijan, and nieces and nephews survive her.

Fascinated by fabric, texture, and design from childhood, Mildred transferred from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn to the Seton Hill Home Economics Department in her freshman year to continue her studies with Sister Anne Elizabeth Regan as her mentor in clothing, textiles, and fashion design. When Mildred graduated from Seton Hill College, she returned to New York where she worked as an assistant supervisor of sales personnel in Gimbel's. An urban legend that she was a fashion model exists among her early alums that I have not been able to confirm until today when I heard from one of her former students that she spoke of her experiences as a model with her class.

On her entrance application Mildred noted that her parents' reaction to her decision to enter was very unfavorable and prevented her entrance for three years. But, this did not deter her.

Mildred T. Corvi, a tall, slender, stunning woman from the Seton Hill College, Class of 1942, entered the Sisters of Charity on January 1, 1943 from Woodhaven, a neighborhood in the borough of Queens, Long Island, New York. She was known as Sister Alice Louise. Those of us who were her students referred to her fondly as "Allie Lou"—our other nicknames for her will remain our secret.

After the novitiate, Sister Alice Louise taught at Immaculate Conception in Irwin, and St. James in Wilkesburg. She also attended Columbia University, where she earned a Master of Arts degree. She joined the faculty of the Home Economics Department in the fall of 1951.

As a professional home economist, Sister Alice Louise continued her education at New York University and Columbia University, enrolling in courses in retailing, merchandising, and textiles testing. She was an active member of the American Home Economics Association and the Pennsylvania Home Economics Association, attending annual conferences and serving as assistant adviser and state adviser to the Pennsylvania Home Economics Association/Student Member Section. In 1977, she was awarded honorary membership in the Pennsylvania Association of Home Economics/Student Member Section in recognition of her twenty-five years as adviser to the Seton Hill Chapter, three years as assistant state adviser, and five years as state adviser of that organization.

Sister Mildred was a Seton Hill pioneer in travel away. She often took her students to the fashion houses, garment factories and runway shows of New York and Europe. She arranged these trips through connections that she maintained with former students.

When she retired from teaching at Seton Hill in 1991, Sister Mildred recalled that Sister de Chantal called all transfers “malcontents.” “But I was content enough to stay around for fifty years.” When a writer for the Forward Magazine inquired why she gave up the glamorous world of high fashion and retailing in New York to become a Sister of Charity, she replied “because I wanted to give my life to something useful and worthwhile—the Church—and to do something with a group of religious people who share my philosophy—women cut from the same cloth.”

Following retirement, Sister Mildred continued living on campus as a member of the Emmanuel Hall and the Victoria Communities serving in the various roles as contact person, sister servant and treasurer. She continued her professional interests of researching and organizing her 200+ historic costume collection, which to her dismay, was moved out of Bayley Hall to make room for a new program in Interior Design in the renamed department of Family and Consumer Sciences. This move happened shortly after she moved to Assumption Hall.

While in residence at Assumption Hall, and then at the Faculty House at Greensburg Central Catholic High School, Sister Mildred, kept busy with needlecrafts and sewing. She prided herself in being able to apply her pattern drafting and draping and design skills to construct an entire garment from a yard of fabric.

A few years before her 80th birthday, Sister Mildred read an article in a crafts magazine about recycling men’s ties into vests. She was intrigued by the concept and had her family and friends collecting ties that she took apart—and can you believe, our Mil, who never discarded any scrap of fabric actually discarded the lining? She then washed and assembled the outer silk pieces through a patchwork procedure using gold thread and the embroidery attachment on her sewing machine. Each of her vests was colorful and unique. She eventually lost count of how many of the vests she made and gave as gifts, or sold in the Caritas Christi Gift Shop. In 2000 she won blue ribbons at the Westmoreland and Allegheny County Fairs for her red and blue vest.

In her later years Sister Mildred suffered the loss of hearing. Even with hearing aids she became frustrated not being able to hear her companions, and she withdrew from larger group activities. She spent hours working on jigsaw puzzles and reading every newspaper that came into the house, but she was always happy to meet individuals one-on-one.

Early on Saturday morning, I was awakened by a call from the nurse on the 11-7 shift telling me that Sister Mildred Corvi’s earthly life had ended at 3 a.m. I rejoiced that her suffering and pain were ended and she now could find rest.

Sister Mildred, you now have the fulfillment of this evening’s Gospel reading—

Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart;
And you will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.

Matthew, 11: 28-3

Funeral Liturgy Reflection
-Sister Victoria Marie Gribschaw, S.C.
September 7, 2011