

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. M. Ermelinda Burgei

BORN: July 1926

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 13, 1943

DIED: June 23, 2011

GOOD morning to all of you who have gathered to remember Sister Ermelinda (Erm or Erme) in this Eucharistic liturgy. It is appropriate that we do so for this special woman lived out the meaning of Eucharist as noted by a friend who characterized her as “truly a treasured gift who has broken herself open and given much to others.” We are especially pleased that Ermelinda’s sister Rita, her nieces, nephews and other relatives and friends can join us today. With us in spirit is her brother Oscar who is unable to be here.

Mary Jane Burgei was born in July 1926 to Charles and Veronica (Stretker) Burgei in Cloverdale, Ohio. She was the fourth youngest of nine children born in this close-knit family and was reared on a farm about a mile from town. During high school she spent her summers working at Kneipp Springs. It was at the end of one of those summers that she came home and announced her decision to join the Sisters of the Precious Blood. She was so certain of her decision that she came home with an empty suitcase having sold all of her clothes except what she was wearing to the other girls with whom she worked. That certainty was also expressed on the form she filled out to enter the postulancy. “Why do you want to enter?” “Because I feel sure it is my vocation.” She never veered from that certainty. She entered the Community on August 13, 1943 and, as a novice, received the name Sister Mary Ermelinda. This August would have marked her 67th year as a Sister of the Precious Blood.

In 1946 Ermelinda began her ministry in primary education at St. Mary’s

in Phoenix, Arizona. She earned two education degrees, a BS in education from the University of Dayton and an MA from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. In addition to her time in Phoenix, her 39 years as a teacher took her to San Luis Rey, Calif., and to various places in Ohio: Ottawa, Cleveland, St. Mary’s, Dayton, Centerville and Wapakoneta. She served as principal at Incarnation School in Centerville and at Resurrection in Dayton.

In 1985 Ermelinda took on a totally different ministry, that of Gift Shop Manager at the Maria Stein Shrine. As in teaching, she brought competency and a calm, gentle presence to the task itself as well as to the people she encountered. She held the manager’s position for 11 years and then became assistant manager until 2002 at which time she chose to be a volunteer – a very active volunteer. She was sacristan at the Chapel, took care of the candles, laundered the linens and served as moderator of the Adoration Guild. Ermelinda was a “do-er”. At the Minster convent where she lived she served as house treasurer, cooked meals, enjoyed several hobbies and even managed to volunteer for the American Heart Association. If something needed to be done, whether in ministry or in community life, she just did it, no complaining or procrastinating. Nothing was too much nor did she draw attention to herself. In 2007, Erm came to Salem Heights and adjusted well to full retirement, having time for prayer and socializing as well as some volunteer activities.

Ermelinda is remembered as a gentle woman who had a quiet sense of humor and enjoyed teasing as well as having fun. Her family was of special importance to

her and she enjoyed all the celebrations and times she spent with them. It was particularly significant that her sister Rita, her brother Oscar and her nieces were able to say their goodbyes over these last few days. Once that was done Erm, in her typical way of approaching life, probably determined that she was ready to die and might as well get on with it. While her death on Thursday night came suddenly from our perspective, her illnesses these past few years indicated to her that this life was ending and she could go home to her God.

There is a poem entitled “Presence” which I think captures Ermelinda’s life.

*Some people enter our lives
like deer
slipping in and out of the woods.*

*They touch our earth
and as we stop
to look at them
they disappear as quietly
as they came.*

*But you feel blessed
for having experienced
their gentle presence*

*And you give thanks
that the world
is a better place
because of the joy
they brought.*

(Sr. Joan Metzner, MM)

Thank you, Erm, for your gentle presence. Rest in peace in the arms of the God you served so faithfully.

Celebrant: Father Bill Kremer, a friend of the Community who regularly celebrates liturgy with us.