

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Kathryn Ann Gunther

(Sister M. Everildis)

BORN: April 1926

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 11, 1941

DIED: July 1, 2010

TODAY we celebrate the life of Sister Kathryn Ann Gunther, better known to us as Sister Katie. I would like to extend a special welcome to her nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends who are present here with us.

Just over 84 years ago, Katie was welcomed into the lives of Charles William Gunther and Mae Strominger-Ruppert-Gunther. She was the third child of four: Edward, Ellen, Katie and Charles, Jr. The family made their home in Wapakoneta, Ohio, and they were active members of St. Joseph Parish. This very close and affectionate family, before retiring each night, had the practice of hugging and kissing each while saying, "Praised be Jesus Christ and God bless you."

This may be why Katie had a serious bout with homesickness when she entered the Sisters of the Precious Blood on Aug. 11, 1941. However, the familiar greeting of "Praised be Jesus Christ," also used by the sisters, did bring her some comfort. But Katie was sure she was where she was supposed to be because, she recounted, "One day, possibly in February of 1941 between the double consecration at the 6 a.m. Mass that I regularly attended with my little brother Charles (I sang in the choir and Charles served the priest), I had an unforgettable experience. From that moment I knew I had been called to be a sister." One and a half years later, on Aug. 15, 1942, Kathryn was invested as a Sister of the Precious Blood and received the name of Sister Everildis.

Sister Katie's first mission was at Precious Blood Elementary School in Fort Wayne, Ind., where she taught for three years. During the next two years, Sister Katie attended The Catholic University of America in Washington and received her bachelor of arts degree. In 1961, she obtained a master of arts degree from the University of Notre Dame. Katie was a lifelong learner, eventually completing all the educational requirements needed to minister as a pastoral associate, hospital chaplain, and reflexologist.

Sister Katie's primary educational ministry was in high schools. Students benefited from her excellent teaching of English and music for 21 years in Ohio at Regina in Cincinnati and Sts. Peter and Paul in Ottawa, in Missouri at Sacred Heart in Sedalia, and in Indiana at Central Catholic in Lafayette. With encouragement from Sister Gertrude Ann Droll, Sister Katie left the classroom in 1971 and spent the next eight years as pastoral associate at St. Pius X in Flint, Mich., followed by 12 years as a chaplain in hospitals and nursing homes in Ohio.

Sister Katie brought professional excellence to each of her ministries but she also brought more: the spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus. She was sincerely motivated to give her all and to remember everyone in prayer, especially our Chilean and Guatemalan missionaries. The setbacks in her life were viewed as opportunities to open new doors—and she did. God was always present in her service to others—even to the

extent, as one friend recalls, of kneeling on the floor as she prayed with a distraught person over the phone. Along with her service Sister Katie used the written word to bring God's presence to others. She created prayer cards for the bride and groom, and our intercessory prayer to Mother Brunner, along with a Way of the Cross; she wrote letters without number to just about everyone, especially prisoners.

Four years ago Katie retired to Emma Hall [the nursing care wing of the Maria-Joseph Living Care Center] where her physical needs could be better met. As she gradually experienced more and more decline in her physical capabilities she consistently remained positive. Perhaps this poem written by Sister Katie expresses some insights into her suffering. It is titled "Divine Madness":

*Divine madman, Jesus,
You're a Calvary-chalice emptied —
All human dignity spilled, poured out;
And You're alone,
Abandoned by Your Father.*

*Share Your madness, Jesus,
Upset our well-kept chalices,
For only starkly naked
And empty
Can we be freed and filled by You.*

Katie we know that you are now able to walk and dance and talk and sing and bask in the God you so loved. We can all hear you saying to us, "I am blessed." And you are!

— Sister Madonna Ratermann