

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Margaret Mary Rigdon

(Sister M. Bertrand)

BORN: December 1920

ENTERED CONGREGATION: January 6, 1960

DIED: March 14, 2015

One of Margaret Mary's favorite sayings was from the musical, *Godspell*: "Dear Lord, three things I pray, to see Thee more clearly, to love Thee more dearly, to follow thee more nearly." Her prayer was answered as she lived her life. We celebrate today Margaret's life of loving, following and passing into the arms of her Dear Lord whom she now sees so very clearly.

Margaret Mary was born to Joseph and Anna (Quaid) Rigdon in December 1920 in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. She was one of eight children — four brothers and three sisters. She enjoyed retelling stories of her "growing up" days with family love and fun as well as enjoying school day pranks.

After graduating from high school in Cape Girardeau she attended and graduated from Southeast Missouri State College. She then taught high school at St. Genevieve before joining the Sisters of Loretto for nine years. Her sister, Erma, was also a Sister of Loretto, having the name Sister Placidus. When Margaret left the Loretto Sisters she obtained a residence and a job at Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio. There she realized a strong attraction for the nursing ministry.

She attended St. Francis School of Practical Nursing where she graduated and obtained an LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) in 1958. She practiced nursing in Cincinnati where she was introduced to Father Philip Hoelle, SM who became her Spiritual Director. Understanding and identifying her call to live as a religious, Father arranged for her to meet with the Sisters of the Precious Blood at the cathedral in Cincinnati. The Sisters there gave her a copy of *Not with Silver or Gold*, the history of their congrega-

tion. God called Margaret to the Sisters of the Precious Blood and she entered the order in 1960. She was given the name, Sister Mary Bertrand, in religion and made final Profession of her vows on August 15, 1966.

She cherished the wholehearted welcome and acceptance given to her by her convent class of '59.

"For me," wrote Sister, "being a member of the Congregation means the opportunity to enrich and deepen my relationship with the Lord ... It has also enabled me to give service to His People in a meaningful way. It means being able to share values, goals, concerns with caring Sisters."

Beginning her religious life as a Precious Blood Sister, she considered it a privilege to work with such dedicated Sisters — Sisters Mildred Westendorf, Mildred Utendorf, Cleophas, Jane Francis, to name a few. Having been encouraged by these nursing sisters she studied for and acquired her license as a Registered Nurse in 1971. Later, Sister took Clinical Pastoral Education training to enable her to be pastorally present to those she served.

Most of her ministry was in health services. After receiving her RN license she ministered in Psychiatric Nursing for two years at Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati. She spent two years ministering at Lourdes Hall in Dayton, Ohio where she became endeared to many of the ailing Sisters. To her, each one was a "beautiful person." To them, she was a "caring, loving person" who met their needs with much "TLC." In 1974 after major surgery and recuperation, she resumed her nursing and for the next 14 years ministered at the Maria Joseph Center in Dayton, Ohio and St. Leonard Center in Centerville, Ohio. A lay person

whom Sister Margaret cared for said, "I shall always remember this loving, dear nurse who came to my room last night when I was asleep and kissed me on the cheek and stayed a short while and visited while she was making her rounds. It was better than medicine."

A friend of Sister Margaret (who now had returned to using her baptismal name) said, "Spend an hour or so with Sister Margaret Mary Rigdon and your sense of balance and serenity will soon be restored. There is such a quiet presence about her."

Margaret liked her quiet moments and spent them praying, relaxing, growing plants, listening to music, and enjoying nature. At other times she was ready to play cards, cook a meal, listen to someone and watch a ball game with a fun loving group.

In 1989 Sister began a ten year ministry of working part-time at the Maria Joseph Center's post office and offered foot care to those in Emma Hall at the Center. In 1999 she retired to Salem Heights where she volunteered, giving foot care to the Sisters. She retired full time in 2003 at Salem Heights. Her ministry was prayer and presence. She shared her love for her Lord— her spirituality with her Sister companions, family members and friends. She became endeared to her nieces and nephews, who like us were touched by this genuine, unassuming, holy woman. In 2015 her weakened health necessitated her receiving nursing care at Maria Joseph Center. On the morning of March 14 her dear Lord called her home.

We are happy for your new life, Margaret. We love you very much and shall miss you until we meet again in heaven.

— Prepared by Sister Nancy Kinross