

## IN MEMORIAM



# Sr. Mary Armella Schoenlein

BORN: April 1921

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 15, 1935

DIED: January 1, 2011

**W**e gather today to celebrate the life of Sister Armella Schoenlein, a humble and gracious woman who has touched the lives of so many of us. We extend a special welcome to Sister Armella's brothers: James, Luke, David, their wives and other relatives and friends.

Ida Mae Schoenlein was born in Cincinnati in April 1921, but grew up in Montezuma and Coldwater, Ohio. Her parents, John and Regina (Rohler) Schoenlein, provided a loving and nurturing home for Ida and her three brothers. It was as a pupil in the Coldwater public school that Ida came to know the Sisters of the Precious Blood. She was just 14 when she left home to join the sisters.

At the time of her entrance on August 15, 1935, at the age of 14, she was asked if she wanted to be a high school aspirant. Her response was that she didn't want to waste time with that. She wanted to be a sister. How like her to "cut to the chase" and get on with life! At her investiture as a novice Ida Mae received the name Mary Armella.

Although Sister Armella thought she would like to be a teacher, she found satisfaction and joy in food service. Beginning in the infirmary at Salem Heights in 1938, she ministered in food service for 50 years. She served bishops, seminarians, high school students, retreatants and senior citizens in the Ohio cities of: Cincinnati, Dayton, Canton and Maria Stein. In California she

served at San Luis Rey and San Diego. When asked about ministry highlights, she mentioned her time at Fatima Hall [the high school aspirancy of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton], at the Maria Stein Retreat Center, and being made Assistant Food Service Director at the Maria Joseph Center.

Prior to her retirement at Salem Heights in 1996, Sister Armella served as coordinator for our sisters on Emma 3 at the Maria Joseph Center. She found the ministry there challenging and rewarding as she took care of the sister's personal needs and found ways to make their declining years pleasant and comfortable. Although quiet in voice and manner she never hesitated to speak up on behalf of her Emma Hall sisters! One of the sisters wrote, "At those times, eyes and attitude occasionally betray that the halo of soft white hair that surrounds her head was once red!"

Never one to rest on her laurels, it was noteworthy to go through Sister Armella's files and discover the number of certificates she received both for professional achievements and in appreciation of her volunteer service at places such as Hospice of Dayton and the Maria Joseph Center. Among her professional achievements was her election as president of the Ohio Chapter of Dietary Managers Association.

Sister Armella was not all work. She enjoyed reading (especially travel books), listening to tapes, playing cards, chatting and spending time with friends. During a sabbatical time she discovered a gift for water color painting and also learned to play the dulcimer.

Whatever Sister Armella did in work, play or prayer she did wholeheartedly. Friends, co-workers and sister companions were inspired by her dedication, patience, humor and generosity.

In October 2007 Sister Armella moved permanently to Emma Hall. Having been Coordinator there for eight and a half years, she described it as "coming home." She quoted from *Our Way of Life* which states that "illness/retirement is a time of diminishment, a time of letting go." And there were many "letting go's" in her time at Emma Hall. She was the last member of her class; she lost a very special friend in Emma Hall, Sr. Meta Creardon; her eyesight was failing her and she could no longer do some of the things she enjoyed. Even with all of this she said, "But this is also a blessed time—a time of prayer and reflection. I spend much of my time thanking and praising God for all the blessings I have been given during these 75 years [as a Sister of the Precious Blood.] I truly look forward to being with my Lord."

On New Year's Day, her Lord came for her in the same way in which she had served him, quietly and gently. Now God truly is her "All."

Last night we sang the song Armella requested, "All I ask of you is to remember me as loving you." It is in that spirit that we now join in this Eucharistic celebration, grateful for all that Sr. Armella has been to us and for us.

— Sister Jeanette Buehler