

Precious Blood Sister Gladys celebrates 100th birthday

Press Release

DAYTON — As a newly-professed Sister of the Precious Blood, Gladys Marie Lowe worked with another sister who was 40 years old. Sister Gladys, then 19, remembers thinking of 40 as elderly and that she would never reach that age herself.

Sister Gladys chuckled at the memory as she celebrated her 100th birthday at Salem Heights in Dayton on May 30 with cake and song from other sisters.

Her Precious Blood community also hosted several events for Sister Gladys, highlighted by a special luncheon with Mass and a reception on June 1 at Salem Heights. Sisters from Dayton and Cincinnati joined with family and friends to celebrate Sister Gladys' milestone birthday. The dining room was adorned with gifts, signs and colorful linens.

Sister Gladys held back tears as Sister Jeanette Buehler read aloud an apostolic blessing from Pope Francis. Other cards and notes came from President Obama, Queen Elizabeth and Willard Scott.

"I was so surprised," Sister Gladys said. "I never expected so many people and so much support. Every day there was something going on."

On May 29, Sister Anne Schulz brought her fourth grade class from Mother Teresa Catholic Elementary School in Liberty Township, Ohio, to Salem Heights for an early birthday party with Sister Gladys, who has been a strong supporter of the school for years.

The students gave a special birthday greeting and a large basket of stuffed animals for Sister Gladys, who simply loves stuffed toys. She beamed as she promptly

affixed a small plush dog to her walker. After a snack of cake and punch, the students accompanied Sister Gladys to the Salem Heights chapel for a brief tour. Later as their school bus pulled away, Sister Gladys, with a wide smile, waved and blew kisses to the students.

The visit from the students was special, she said, because much of her ministry was spent working with children, and it was during her own childhood with Precious Blood Sisters that she discovered her own calling to religious life.

A native of Dayton, Sister Gladys grew up in the former Sacred Heart Parish. Her father died when she was young and her mother sent her three young children to live at St. Joseph Orphanage, which was operated by the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Sister spent much of her childhood at the orphanage until her mom eventually remarried. A short time later, however, her mom died and Gladys was sent back to orphanage at age 12.

She loved the orphanage and the sisters.

"They had so much kindness in caring for the children and the needs that they had," Sister Gladys said. "Their prayer services were so fulfilling that that's why I wanted to be a sister."

She remembers sneaking out of bed into the choir loft at the orphanage and listening to the Sisters praying and singing.

At age 16, one of the sisters asked Gladys what she wanted to do with her life. There was no hesitation: she wanted to join the convent.

After formation, she spent 15 years working in the orphanage, taking care of the little boys. She then ministered in Rome City, Ind., for 19 years before



Precious Blood Sister Laura Will greets Sister Gladys Marie Lowe at Sister Gladys' 100th birthday celebration June 1 at Salem Heights in Dayton.

spending nearly 20 years at San Luis Rey in Oceanside, Calif.

She made her lasting impact at San Luis Rey, first at the Academy and then at the Old Mission Montessori School. She ran the student lunch store, watched the younger kids and helped the needy through St. Vincent de Paul.

The school's annual fiesta, though, is where she best-remembered. Sister Gladys operated a booth that sold everything from trinkets to toys to jewelry. The items were donated. She was so popular that people would show up the day before the fiesta opened in order get a jump on their shopping. The booth is still part of the annual fiesta and it is named after Sister Gladys.

"She's just a whole-hearted and gives to everybody," said Sister Mary Yarger, who taught at San Luis Rey Academy when Sister Gladys worked there. "She's just a good human soul. She gives to everybody."