

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Sally (M. Salome) Smietanka

(Sister Mary Ambrosine)

BORN: September 1919

ENTERED CONGREGATION: September 3, 1934

DIED: October 5, 2008

WE have just come from a beautiful time of sharing personal memories of Sister Sally. Now we prepare to enter into the Eucharistic liturgy that celebrates her final union with the Lord she served so well. We Sisters of the Precious Blood are so pleased that her sister, Adele [Tetzloff], and her nephew Robert Tetzloff are here with us. We offer our sympathy to both of you.

Salome, or Sally as we know her, was born to Stanley and Victoria (Wojcik) Smietanka in September 1919, in Cleveland. She was the second of six children: Joseph, who died at the age of four, twin girls Wanda and Sophia who died at 11 months, and her sisters Adele and Stella.

Both parents were born in Poland, and so Sally's first language was Polish. She struggled through English-speaking elementary school at Our Lady of Good Counsel by memorizing what she could not read or comprehend because of the language difference.

After one year in the aspirancy, Sally became a postulant on September 3, 1934, and received the name Sister Mary Ambrosine upon entrance to the novitiate. After making her first profession in 1937, she attended the Athenaeum of Ohio for two years, eventually graduating with a bachelor's of science degree in education. She later earned a master's degree in education from Xavier University, Cincinnati.

Sally spent over 50 years in the class-

room, teaching primary grades even while serving for five years as principal at Assumption School in Dayton. Her first teaching assignment was in Maria Stein, Ohio, where she taught first, second and third grades — quite a feat for a fledging teacher whom the school board didn't really want because she was a "city girl." Sister Sally must have proved herself, for she continued at Maria Stein for seven years. Sally taught in several other Ohio schools: St. Peter and Paul in Norwood; St. Joseph, Wapakoneta; and Glandorf Local. Other than four years in Rensselaer, Indiana, the remainder of Sally's teaching career took place in California. She spent three years at St. Anthony's in Manteca and nearly 30 years at St. Mary's in Escondido.

Perhaps it was Sr. Sally's own difficulties in school as a child that made her such an effective teacher. One of her co-teachers had this to say about Sally's abilities: "She is a great role model because of her unique personal integrity, work ethic, professional competency and terrific devotion to her pupils. Her no-nonsense approach to teaching is ameliorated by a delightful sense of humor. She has the 'Midas touch' of making the learning experience a glorious, happy time for the little ones."

Sally was recognized in 1976 as Outstanding Elementary Teacher of America, a national award based on recommendations submitted to the national review board by the principal and faculty of St. Mary's in Escondido.

Those who lived with Sally remember her as a congenial person. She enjoyed having a good time and especially liked

to dance the polka. Sally was always ready for an adventurous trip with her friend, Sister M. Alice Geers. Sally cared about others and was serious about her commitment to God. In reflecting on her 60 years in the congregation, Sally said that to be a to be a Sister of the Precious Blood means.... "living a consecrated life from day to day; being a passionate disciple in a fractured world; living in the presence of His presence."

The expression "living in the presence of His presence" was one of Sally's favorite sayings. I feel certain that was what gave life to her during her years of active ministry as well as during her time of retirement.

Sally returned to Salem Heights in 2000. Here Sally was able to be "in the presence of His presence" before the Blessed Sacrament.

This past year was a particularly difficult one for Sally as she dealt with many health problems, never indicating how much physical pain she was suffering unless you asked her directly. Even then she never elaborated upon it. Sally accepted physical suffering calmly, patiently, hoping for healing but ultimately trusting in God's will.

Today, as we celebrate this Eucharistic Liturgy, we give thanks to God for the witness of Sister Sally's life. We know that she is now experiencing the fullness of what it means to be "in the presence of His presence."

—Sr. Jeanette Buehler, CPPS