

Nun died at 103, lived a life of helping

Precious Blood Sister was generous with her time.

LOCAL By Pamela Dillon - Contributing Writer

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A beloved Precious Blood sister passed away on Jan. 5, 2018, at the age of 103. Sister Gladys Marie Lowe gave her life to the Lord's service at the tender age of 16 on Sept. 4, 1930.

She was quite used to the Sisters of the Precious Blood order, as she lived there as a young girl after the death of her father, David Lowe. Her mother, Mary Gordon Lowe, sought help from St. Joseph Orphanage in east Dayton for Gladys and two siblings.

She would return home after her mother remarried. Unfortunately, her mother passed away from pneumonia after giving birth to her fifth child, Gladys' half-sister Freida. Gladys, then 12, and her siblings once again found themselves at St. Joseph Orphanage.

Sister Patricia Kremer gave the eulogy at Lowe's memorial Mass on Jan. 10.

"Gladys remembered sneaking out of bed into the choir loft at the orphanage to observe and listen to the Sisters praying and singing night prayers," said Kremer at the service. "When asked by one of the sisters what she wanted to do with her life, without a moment's hesitation she said, 'I want to join the convent.'"

In her religious life, she was given the name Mary Bernetta, but later returned to her baptismal name. By any name, she was loved by all who knew her. After five years of working in domestic arts at Immaculate Heart Seminary and St. Thomas Seminary, she ministered in the healing arts at Kneipp Springs in Indiana for 19 years.

According to Kremer, Lowe's true love and calling "was to God's little ones and the poor." She returned to the orphanage to care for "her boys" for 15 years. She had a 20-year adventure in San Luis Rey, Calif., where she ministered to the young women at San Luis Rey Academy. She also helped the children, parents and faculty of the Old Mission Montessori School out west.

"The little children would follow after her, like a line of ducks," said Kremer, who lived in San Luis Rey with Lowe for seven months.

While in California, Lowe was busy collecting, sorting and giving away food, clothing and furniture to help those in need. She also organized an annual White Elephant booth to help provide funding for the school. Right before moving back to Dayton in 1994, Father Michel Gagnon, pastor at St. Luis Rey Mission Parish helped organize a retirement potluck to honor her.

He wrote in the invitation, "If this little bundle of dynamite ever lit your fuse, you'll want to be there to thank her and wish her well in her retirement."

But retirement didn't sit well with Lowe. She accompanied sisters at Salem Heights and Emma Hall to doctor appointments and aided recycling efforts. She also loved to play



Top, The late Sister Gladys when she was in her 70s working with children at the San Luis Rey Mission in California. Bottom, Sister Gladys at 49 at St. Joseph's Orphanage in Dayton. CONTRIBUTED

"Nickels" cards and Bingo.

"Gladys was a very skilled Bingo player, often calling out that magic word and collecting her prize of laundry soap, lotion or Kleenex, which she generously shared with others," remembered Kremer.

She was preceded in death by her brothers, David and John Lowe, her sister, Marie Lowe, and her half-sister, Freida Robynette Gram. She is survived by her Precious Blood community of sisters, nieces, nephews and friends.

"Prayer is the real focus of my days. I keep each of you in prayer every day. God is so good to me; I hardly know how to thank Him enough," wrote Lowe in a Christmas letter she had dictated at the age of 100.