



Sr. Adeline Mertz

BORN: June 1924

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 15, 1944

DIED: October 16, 2021

We Sisters of the Precious Blood are greatly blessed with many writings, in her own cursive handwriting, given to us from Sister Adeline Mertz. In July 2015 Adeline wrote, "I have been praying for years to God to teach me to pray, to live my life as God wants me to live it. I think that God has been doing that in one way or another. My prayer life has certainly deepened over the years. I live now much more conscious of God's guidance in my life. I know that Jesus, Mary and Joseph and many other saintly souls lived contemplative and very busy lives. I believe that Mother Brunner lived a contemplative life in her last years and I think that is what she wanted to pass on to the future."

I learned early on in the Community when Adeline lived at Salem Heights that she was one of the most prayerful holy persons in our Congregation. During my novitiate years, I caught on that Adeline, though not educated in a worldly fashion as most, was truly a person close to God, and highly educated by God through many hours of contemplation. Adeline was one of us who truly lived Precious Blood Spirituality, or, as she called it, she lived the contemplative spirit. Simultaneously, Adeline lived a life of service, feeding the hungry, cleaning, arranging, readying space for retreatants, and praying for each person who would occupy each room that she readied for their arrival. Adeline intuitively understood that her acts of service flowed from her hours of quiet adoration, whether she did that in Chapel or while she worked.

Sister Adeline began her life as Anna Marie Mertz in June 1924 in St. Patrick, Ohio. She was born to John and Catherine Mertz, the oldest of nine children. She had eight siblings, two sisters and six brothers. As a child and early teen, Anna Marie did live through some of the usual type of hardship during the Depression as many people did. Of a more traumatic nature of suffering with lifelong consequences, she experienced the

unexpected death of her mother when she was 15. At that time, she was called upon to take on the primary mothering role for her siblings and the management of her household while her Dad sought work wherever he could find it. To that end, she was no longer able to finish her secondary schooling. She writes, "My Dad dreaded it, but got permission for me to quit school so that I could take care of the younger children, especially my baby brother who was only nine months old." Consequently, Adeline spent five years overseeing the household and caring for her siblings.

At first Adeline felt an attraction to motherhood but as time went on, she found herself leaning more and more toward religious life. Adeline's sister next to her in age grew old enough, promising to assume the primary caretaker role so that Adeline could pursue her call. Adeline was received as a postulant by the Sisters of the Precious Blood at the age of 20, on August 15, 1944. She credits her time in the novitiate that nurtured her love of prayer, her devotion to the Precious Blood, her dedication to the Congregation and her love for the many people she served throughout her life. She said, "all the beliefs and values that I hold dear today were planted in those three years in the novitiate."

After novitiate, Adeline found herself in various places of ministry where she was known for her dedication and hard work. First, she spent a short time at St. Joseph's Orphanage, then three years in the sewing room at the Motherhouse. The next 10 years, she would continue to work hard at St. Joseph's College, St. Gregory's Seminary, back to St. Joseph's Orphanage, then to St. Mary's Novitiate, next to Burkettsville, then back to Dayton. Finally, after all her many moves, she was able to settle down and stay for many years at Maria Stein.

The Sisters at Maria Stein commended Adeline for her standards of cleanliness and her practice of providing beautiful flowers for the retreatants to enjoy. In the write-up for Adeline's 50th Jubilee, Sister Barbara Ann Hoying praised

Adeline for her care and attention to detail with housekeeping, regardless of how exhausting and draining it could be. Sister Cordelia said that lilies were growing in Cincinnati from the bulbs Adeline gave to the guests. In her free time, before her prayer in Chapel at night, she would often lovingly tend to her flower beds and vegetable garden.

As I said at the beginning of these words of remembrance, we are blessed with many writings, pages and pages from Adeline, all in her cursive handwriting. She even wrote three pages explaining what she learned by reading the classic book on contemplation titled *Finding Grace at the Center* written by Trappist monks Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington and Jesuit priest Thomas Clarke. This book revived the ancient spiritual tradition of Christian contemplation, especially helpful for those of us who live in the Western world, and it helped launch the more recent Centering Prayer movement.

Finally, I am going to leave us with more of Sister Adeline's words. I quote: "Many people today feel a longing for God in their hearts. They want to know more about contemplative prayer; how to live a life of closely following Jesus. Our spirit is contemplative. How can we help people find God in their daily life, how to live this deeper life of union with God, not just talk about it but really live it? It's a great need of our time to help people find God deeply in their life, to counteract all the evil in our world today. We have to live it first before we can teach and show others how to live it. It will bring real peace in our own life too."

Adeline, holy woman that you are now, I pray that you bless us each with a desire for a deeper life of union with God so that we bring God's love to others in actions of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness. In other words, Adeline, help us strive for right relationships in our world today by striving for a deeper union with God. Amen.

— Sister Marla Gipson