



Sister Maria Luisa Miller

BORN: November 1936

ENTERED CONGREGATION: January 1954

DIED: January 2, 2023

In the midst of the winter of November 1936 at 1:30 a.m., Mary Louise Catherine Miller was born to Isidore and Florence Deitering Miller on a farm outside of Cloverdale, Ohio. Before she was a year old, her parents moved to Ottoville, Ohio. She was the oldest of eight children, four boys and four girls. From the earliest years, Mary Lou was expected to assist at home, becoming almost a second mother to her younger siblings. Her life was filled with school and work at home where, as in most farm families, all helped out. She went to the public school in Ottoville where Sisters of the Precious Blood were her teachers. From the time that she was very young, she knew she wanted to be a Sister. She said she thinks she owed her vocation to Sister Ida Kramer, who was her second-grade teacher. She confided in her eighth-grade teacher, Sister Leonita Westerheide, that she always felt that she wanted to be a Sister but did not know how to go about it. With Sister Leonita's help, she went to Fatima High School, the aspirancy for the Sisters of the Precious Blood, in Dayton. She entered the postulancy in January 1954. When she became a novice in August 1954, she was given the name of Sister Mary Thecla.

Her first mission assignment after her profession was to St. Mary School in Linton, North Dakota, where she taught second and third grades for two years. After returning to UD to finish her degree, she was assigned to St. Francis Xavier School and then to St. Mary School, both in St. Joseph, Missouri. Then she was in Ottawa, Ohio, teaching at Sts. Peter and Paul School for three years. When the Congregation began sending Sisters to Chile, she had requested to be sent. She credits her desire to be a missionary to her mother. She said her mother had a missionary heart and for many years she found creative ways to earn money for the missions of our Congregation.

Her request was granted, and in 1966, she, along with Sister Marita Beumer,

left to be missionaries in Chile. It was at this time that Sister Thecla changed back to her baptismal name, but in Spanish. Another reason for the change is that *tecla* in Spanish means "piano keys"! Since then, she has been known as Sister Maria Luisa. With a new name, which was really an old name in a new language, she set off on the beginning of a journey of 55 years ministering to and with the people of Chile.

Maria Luisa began her missionary work as a teacher in St. Gaspar School in Santiago. She continued at the school for 19 years. For many years the Sisters in Chile would work in a paid position during the day and then do pastoral work in the evenings and on weekends. As she explained when she celebrated her 50th Jubilee, "In my parish work I help in the formation of new Christian communities. I also truly enjoy accompanying retreats with laity and religious. I do this on the deanery level at least four times a year and upon request by religious for eight-day Ignatian retreats. For many years I have worked in parishes, especially with the family catechetical program. Thus, I have helped hundreds, perhaps thousands of children to prepare for their First Communion. I also like to crochet and do crafts, although I have dedicated little time to these hobbies in the past years.

Since the Conference of Religious of Chile founded a type of health insurance for religious, I have been the executive secretary of the *Mutual de Salud*. This has been a great help for religious who work without any type of health insurance. It provides me the opportunity to have contact with some ninety congregations of men and women."

On her 60th Jubilee she shared, "Besides the community responsibilities of treasurer over the years and accompanying my Sisters as [Vicariate] Coordinator during three periods, we have exercised many efforts in the formation and accompaniment of the Precious Blood laity groups in our

parishes of Santiago. What a joy to see others growing in this reconciling and spiritual motivation that not on drop of Jesus' Blood be shed in vain! We have shared our dear Maria Anna Brunner and her spirituality with our people and they greatly identify with her as mother, spouse, and widow and in her solidarity with the needy."

Her close-knit family was always a great support to her and to her ministry in Chile. We send our condolences to all of her family members, especially to her brothers Dennis, Isidore — better known as Junior — and Robert, and to her sisters Dianna, Kathleen and Lorna. We know that they are here today with their spouses and also some of her nieces and nephews.

Maria Luisa was always in service to others. As you can see, she touched many people during her 55 years in Chile. Besides living it, she shared Precious Blood spirituality through her ministry. She continued to serve after returning to Dayton in June 2021 because of her cancer diagnosis. Until the last couple of weeks of her life, she sent the daily Scripture readings to people in Chile with whom she had ministered. Sister Rita Manriquez told me that she had recently said to Maria Luisa that, just like Mother Brunner, she was still needed to serve the Congregation and the people of God from heaven. I am sure that Maria Luisa will continue to do so, just as her spirit of service and love for the Precious Blood will live on in the many people she touched. Maria Luisa, while we will miss your smile, your positive attitude, and your love for the Precious Blood and the culture and the people of Chile, we know that you are now with the God you loved and served throughout your life and that you are reunited with your parents, your brother Donald, with Mother Brunner and her daughters in the joy of heaven. *Que descanses en paz!*
Gloria a la Sangre de Jesus!

— Sister Ann Clark