

Sister Louise Marie Simcoe, OSF

Born: January 8, 1947

Entered our community: September 8, 1964

Returned to God: March 30, 2018

Anne Therese Simcoe, born in Pittsburgh's "Soho" district, was the daughter of Andrew and Anne Therese Simcoe. It was from them that she and her younger sister Louise learned the value of prayer, the importance of family and the reality of giving without counting the cost.

Anne Therese entered our community from St. Agnes parish in Oakland where she was taught by the Sisters of Mercy. However it was at St. Casimir High School on the South Side that she came to experience our community. At her investing, she took the name Sister Louise Marie after her sister Louise.

Reading her service record, it is no surprise that Sister Louise Marie was fond of little children. Her very first assignment after completing her Bachelor of Education at LaRoche University was right back to St. Casimir with her beloved first and second graders! Imagine having been a student in the high school and then returning to teach these little ones. But at the end of the year, Louise had to pack up and go to St. Valentine in Bethel Park and at the end of that year on to Mt. St. Peter in New Kensington.

We sisters used to laugh at the bouncing ball assignments younger sisters received, especially those who were gentle, kind and absolutely **obedient** because they were often transferred to assist with other difficult situations. Noticing that after one year Louise was sent to James LaVelle in West Mifflin and then to Our Lady of Sorrows in Kearny, NJ, we see the pattern but are grateful that Louise always taught first graders. So her early years gave her the opportunity to serve in five different parishes and with different communities. With each assignment, the community of sisters was so grateful to have Sister Louise Marie who was so kind, helpful and had many skills.

After three separate times at St. Valentine, Sister Louise Marie was finally given a chance to sink roots in Elizabeth NJ at Sts. Peter and Paul for three years. But then it was back to one year assignments until in 1982 when her mother was very sick that she requested a year to help care for her mom.

It would seem that Sister Louise Marie experienced her fondest memories of little first grade students at James Lavelle School in West Mifflin from 1986-1996 as she was able to see her young ones graduate from eighth grade! Parents were always delighted that their children were in the care of someone who loved them. Her very gentle and caring ways made it so much easier for children to learn.

After those wonderful ten years a new experience awaited Sister Louise Marie as she was asked to serve at the Assistant Director our Franciscan Child Day Care Center and guide the newly hired lay Director in the mission of our ministry there. A second challenge came when she was invited to serve the community as Vocation Director. In her photo collection there is a series of delightful pictures showing Louise Marie explaining the stages of religious life using our sister-dolls!

One of the wonderful experiences of our religious life in these years since Vatican II is the opportunity to serve as Pastoral Visitors in parishes to assist the staff with homebound parishioners. Both the Catholic Community in Sharpsburg and St. Joseph Parish in O'Hara Township were blessed to have Louise to visit their sick, bringing Eucharist to them, encouraging them and spending time in conversation. Grieving with families at the death of a loved one was a skill Louise practiced well with her compassionate and supportive presence.

It is not the easiest thing to be a listener but Sister Louise Marie had a natural gift to **truly** listen. She was always aware of the needs of others and responded enthusiastically. Her good friend, Sister Janice feels that Louise epitomizes the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, embodying God's love and kindness to all. This is seen in a letter the daughter of a homebound elderly man wrote in November, 2005:

“For some months now, a high point in my eighty-four year old father's life has been the bi-weekly visits of Sister Louise Marie Simcoe to bring him Communion and to chat. Since our Mother's death in December, 2004, my sisters and I have been comforted in knowing that Sister Louise Marie was visiting our father, John Babilon of Etna. At first Dad, who is a pretty private guy, wasn't so sure he wanted someone coming to the house. It wasn't long before it was obvious that Dad was really looking forward to the visits from the woman he called his 'spiritual advisor'.”

In an article Louise prepared for our Congregational Bulletin, she wrote: “What a humbling and awesome gift to bring Jesus to those who are sick, suffering or infirm. Not only do I bring Eucharist to them, but they are Eucharist for me, for I see and experience in them the face of the suffering Christ. What a witness to me of people's great faith and trust in God even during times of testing and pain.”

Her special gift of caring for the dying and their families is evident in her words:

“Besides offering a presence of care, compassion and support to family members who are grieving, I also conduct the vigil prayer services at the funeral home of the deceased and attend the funeral liturgies and serve as lector or Eucharistic minister. After the burial, I do a follow-up with those families who have lost loved ones.” It is no wonder that Sister Louise Marie was sorely missed when she had to give up this beloved ministry in 2014. However, she met her diminishment with the same grace as her very early transfers from school to school.

John Foley, St. Casimir graduate and President of the Alumni Board featured Sister Louise Marie in article he wrote in praise of her for their publication: “In her role as 'Sister Liaison' to the St. Casimir Board both her sense of care for all the details of the meetings and her concern for

each of the individual board members has been an asset to smooth planning. In the words of Sister Louise Marie, ‘Let us continue to be united in heart and prayer – let us always seek the good in one another and strive to have hearts full of love and understanding. ’

It seems only fitting that we close this reflection by citing Sister Louise Marie’s favorite scripture quotations that truly express her prayerful way of life:

“The Lord has done great things for me . . . ” (Lk. 1:49)

and

“I always remember you in my prayers and always thank God for you.” (Eph. 1:15-16)

We will remember **you** dear Louise Marie for your blessed life and witness. We treasure singing with you just this past Community Day your favorite songs, Easter Parade and You Are My Sunshine. Sorry we just weren’t up to Whitney Houston’s “One Moment in Time!” But you definitely have been **our** Sunshine these past 71 years!

Eternal rest, dear Sister Louise Marie, may you be at peace with your beloved Blessed Mother and her son Jesus.

Read by Sister Janice Campbell
Written by Sister Peg Markey