



## **Remembering Sister Joselma Campbell**

June 19, 1916 – Jan. 6, 2010

On June 19, 2009, the 93<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of her birth, Sister Joselma received from her family a beautifully compiled album of photos of her family and friends who were dear to her over the course of her then already-long life. This memorable album became the starting-point of a delightful series of conversations in which Sister Joselma reflected on her life.

Sister Joselma's father, John Joseph Campbell, had been born in Edinburg, Scotland, and her mother, Julia McCarthy Campbell, came from County Cork in Ireland. Good Catholics, they eventually met in Toronto, Canada, where they were married.

John and Julia became the parents of four children. Their first-born, Anna Mary, our Sister Joselma, first opened her eyes to the light of day on June 19, 1916. Two girls followed: Kathleen and Theresa. John, their little brother completed the family.

While the family was still very young, Mr. Campbell, never a man known to frequent doctors' offices, died of a severe case of yellow jaundice at age 36. He left Julia with four small children, and his loss was keenly felt. Then death struck the family once more when Theresa, just a child of nine years, died of spinal meningitis.

In 1926, Julia Campbell re-married, and Maurice Fitzgerald became step-father to Ann, Kathleen, and John. The family moved to Detroit and located in the vicinity of Most Holy Redeemer Church. A daughter, Mary Ellen, was born of this marriage.

Ever a fun-loving child, Ann's growing-up years were happy ones in the midst of the family she loved. Her formal education began at St. Vincent School in Detroit which she attended for her first five grades. She then transferred to Holy Redeemer, and it was there that she completed her high school education. Sports of every kind interested her, especially baseball, her favorite. In her high school years she played on the girls' varsity basketball team.

When an opportunity to take music lessons was offered, Ann eagerly accepted, and she went quite gladly to the half-hour's practice on the piano when she arrived home from school each day. Being able to produce music for her own and other peoples'

pleasure has been a source of joy well into her senior years. Ann was an avid reader, and from early on she claimed that she was intrigued by the lives of the saints.

Sister Mary Thoma had been Ann's first grade teacher. As a very young student, Ann was much impressed by her and stated that she felt the longing to be a sister from her first grade onward. On one day in May during her senior year at Holy Redeemer, Joselma recalled that Sister Florence Louise, IHM, (whom she referred to as Flossie Lou) called on her to take charge of the study hall. Then, rather off-handedly, Sister added, "Oh, by the way, Ann, are you coming home with us in June?"

Now, Ann had always hoped to join the Dominicans as her friend was planning to do. But, on this occasion she answered "yes" to Sister Florence Louise. When she approached her mom about what she thought of this plan, "I'm tickled pink," was the reply. "I had a good Irish mother," reflected Joselma.

Anna Mary Campbell entered the Postulate in Monroe on June 22, 1934. She was received into the Novitiate, and given the name Sister Joselma, on Jan. 2, 1935. Her first profession was on Aug. 15, in 1937, and on Aug. 15, three years later, Sister Joselma professed her final vows.

In her 50-plus years in the classrooms of Monroe, Detroit, Akron, Benton Harbor, Puerto Rico and Florida, she met hundreds of students and taught in all of the elementary grades of one through eight. Sister has written more about her years in Puerto Rico, possibly because initially she didn't want to go so far away from home, family and community. She admitted that she had volunteered to go "just in case God wanted me to!" But tears flowed freely when the appointment by Mother Teresa actually came. However, once arrived on the island she fell in love with Puerto Rico. She rated the students "precious," and found the scenery awesome.

After seven years in Santurce and Cayey, she left Puerto Rico to take up other assignments to teach at St. Thomas in Ann Arbor, St. Mary in Wayne, Holy Redeemer in Detroit and St. John in Benton Harbor.

In the course of all these years, Sister recalled some enjoyable opportunities to chaperone groups of students who travelled to England, Ireland, Scotland and France. Sister appreciated these travel-times which brought her in touch with people and customs of different places, beautiful scenery and the compelling magnificence of the ocean. Of all the countries visited, Scotland, her father's birthplace, seems to have impressed her most of all.

In 1990, Sister Joselma retired to the Motherhouse in Monroe. Here she enjoyed the time to read and reflect. Doing some religious education on a volunteer basis kept her in touch with young people. She watched for those times when groups of children came from one of the nearby schools to visit the Motherhouse sisters. On one such time when students came from St. Patrick School in Carleton as part of a Vocations Awareness Week, a photo appeared in the *Monroe Evening News* showing Sister Joselma playing the piano for them. She liked being where the action was. Prior to her move to the Health Care Center in 2009, she happily used her walker to join the other residents in the main Dining Room, which was a long distance from her room in the Motherhouse. Once finished with her lunch and seated at the piano, she provided musical accompaniment for those still dining – usually a medley of Irish tunes.

In her later years she truly enjoyed playing a game of cards. Sister Mary Ann Grates, who was a very frequent partner, spoke of Joselma's love of winning...by whatever rules!

Sister Joselma did not often speak about her relationship with God. The thoughts she expressed in her page of the IHM Book of Life indicate her search to find the words to describe God's "gorgeous, stupendous, awesome beauty:" the mighty ocean waves, the stars high in heaven's vault. She then says simply, "I found you in loved ones, and friends. I met you in prayer as face to face we talked. You are the sweet mystery of life for us, unfathomable, incredible, eons of space away. Yet, how do I sometimes feel your love? Like music in my heart!"

For Sister Joselma, the search is complete, and far from having to reach for words to describe who God is to her, she can now realize life in all its fullness in the presence of the One she has always loved, and to whom she dedicated her life.

Be at peace, Joselma, our love and prayers are with you.

Written by: Marie Gatza, IHM  
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