

SISTER LOUISE JOSEPH FITZGERALD

1894 - 1982

Geraldine Marie Fitzgerald was born in Boston, Massachusetts, November 21, 1894. Her baptism was recorded in the parish Church of the Most Holy Redeemer. She attended the parish schools taught by Notre Dame Sisters at Most Holy Redeemer and Fitton, and graduated from the classical department of East Boston High School in 1913. After high school she attended Bryant-Stratton Business School, and worked as a secretary until 1918 when she enlisted for two years in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force in the branch known as Yeomen (F), and was stationed at Charleston Navy Yard. Years later she still joyfully recalled her good fortune in being one of a select group to ride out to sea in a submarine chaser to greet the first U. S. soldiers returning from action in Europe in World War I. The close of the war brought another enlistment, this time for life with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. She entered the novitiate at the Summit, Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1921, receiving the name, Sister Louise Joseph, and was professed in 1923.

The early years of her religious life found her following a rigid program of spiritual and professional training for what was destined to be a long unbroken career of 50 years of teaching. She received the A. B. degree at St. Xavier College, Cincinnati, in 1929, and the M. A. at University of Notre Dame in 1939. As the years passed, she would follow courses at many other colleges and universities. Few sisters in the Ohio Province have had such varied professional experiences as Sister Louise Joseph. On elementary levels, she shared two years in the Cathedral School, Columbus, Ohio, and St. Xavier, Cincinnati. In commercial high schools she taught four years between St. Victor, Calumet City, Illinois, and St. Francis Xavier, Cincinnati. In Academies of Notre Dame her contributions added up to nine years between Sixth Street, Cincinnati, and St. Joseph Academy, Columbus. Her longest span of thirty-five years was passed among the following central high schools: Notre Dame High School, Chicago, 15 years in three tenures; Julianne High School, Dayton, six years in three tenures; Notre Dame High School, Hamilton, six years; Mt. Notre Dame High School, Cincinnati, eight years. Sister's final years in the classroom were at Mt. Notre Dame High School 1967-1975 when she served as assistant librarian, and in part-time classes in writing.

In the midst of her teaching years, Sister was appointed Mistress of Postulants in the newly located novitiate at Mt. Notre Dame, 1934-1937. During this period she also edited the Draw Net, the Ohio Province magazine for the Notre Dame mission in China.

Sister Louise Joseph had always loved and appreciated the apostolic horizons afforded her during her long teaching years. Her unflinching interest in the scholastic progress of her students was also extended to their personal problems, and often followed them into their adult lives.

Sister was retired to the Health Center at Mt. Notre Dame in 1975. During the final years of her life, a series of falls resulting in serious fractures and periods of enormous physical suffering and immobility made one wonder how one of her fragile build could sustain such ordeals. Her endurance, however, was phenomenal, for throughout her life she had steeled herself to accept hard things. She could have entered the eastern novitiate at Waltham, Massachusetts, where she would have been near friends and relatives. Instead she chose the Mid-west where she thought she could more generously fulfill her religious commitment. Sister loved to write, particularly fragments of verse for special occasions. She also published a number of articles on St. Julie and the Institute. At the New Year in 1973 she wrote the following lines:

I have been given a candle - the gift of another year. May its light show its way to others - its warmth cheer the cold and disheartened - the steadiness of its flame inspire true faithfulness to God. As my candle burns slowly day by day, Lord, with Your love sustain its brightness throughout the coming year.