



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

Early in the evening of June 27, 2016, two days before the upcoming feast of Saints Peter and Paul, our sister, Mary Peter Didier, peacefully departed from this life and joyfully beheld the glory of the face of God. Joining the cloud of countless witnesses (Heb 12:1) whom she personally accompanied to the threshold of eternity over the course of her sixty-three years as a nurse, she generously and lovingly fulfilled the mission for which she was created.

Born to her loving parents Aloysius and Emma (Geimer) Didier, in Evanston, Illinois, on April 18, 1921, Clara Didier was the fifth of fourteen children. Raised on the family farm in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, Clara was a good-natured child, self-directed, hard-working, tireless and always eager “to get the job done,” no matter what the duty or responsibility. Together with her brothers and sisters, she attended St. Mary’s Parish School in Des Plaines, Illinois, where she was taught by the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. Readily recognized as a member of the Didier clan, well-known and acknowledged for their energy and enthusiasm when it came to faith, family, farming and the steadfast following of the Chicago Cubs, the young Clara was inspired and encouraged by her older siblings, especially, Florence (Sr. M. Ambrose, OSF) and Martha Josephine (Sr. M. Johanna, OSF). She completed her high school studies at St. Patrick Academy in Des Plaines, Illinois, where her special interests in math and science, coupled with her sense of vocation, were nurtured by the Sisters of Mercy. Devout and determined, and following in the footsteps of St. Clare and the apostle Peter whose namesake she would soon become, Clara responded to the call to discipleship with an undivided heart and an undaunted spirit.

Ready to do great things for Christ and eager to do her part in building the Kingdom of God, Clara arrived at St. Francis Convent on September 5, 1939, and entered the Congregation as a postulant. Soon thereafter, she began her studies at the College of St. Francis where she majored in chemistry. On August 12, 1940, she was received as a novice and given the name Sister Mary Peter. Two years later, she made her first profession of vows and went forward on her envisioned ministerial path of high school teaching which began at Sacred Heart Parish High School in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago. Within a year, Sr. Peter returned to Joliet to complete her Bachelor of Science degree and begin teaching Mathematics, Biology, Homemaking and Sewing at St. Francis Academy. A gifted exemplar of integrated knowing, with an amazing capacity for multi-tasking, she also lived as a sister in residence with her sister, Sr. Johanna, other Franciscan sisters, and a community filled with high-spirited teenage aspirants who included in their number her own sisters Mary Therese and Barbara.

Indeed, the Didier sisters were everywhere! Mentored for leadership and dedicated service by her principal, then Sister M. Borromeo, Sr. Peter was identified as someone who demonstrated the qualities necessary to meet an emerging need in the Congregation, namely, the care of the infirm and elderly sisters. In the Fall of 1950, Sr. Peter was called forth and commissioned by Mother Immaculate for a new and unexpected apostolate: *Nursing!* At the age of twenty-nine, her life in ministry took a decisive turn as she enthusiastically began her studies at St. Joseph School of Nursing and, as the chroniclers say: “*The rest is history!*”

Alleluia!



Sister Peter Didier, OSF

Missioned to serve in the Motherhouse Infirmary by Mother M. Immaculate in August of 1953, Sr. Peter assumed the responsibilities entailed in the ministry of nursing and caring for her Franciscan sisters in body, mind and spirit. Recalling the mystery of the Transfiguration and experience of St. Peter at Mount Tabor, she held fast to the sacred words of the Gospel and made them her own: “It is good for *me* to be here” (Lk 9:33-34). By her own account, the challenges and demands of this new ministry were manifold as were the countless graces and blessings. Day by day, she learned lessons that would last her a lifetime. One of these included the insight that as a nurse she stood in a vitally important position each time she accompanied a person who was preparing to cross the bridge between time and eternity. Many were the moments to which Sr. Peter referred as “awakenings” that enabled her to see that the ground upon which she stood was holy, as were the hands she held, the bodies she bathed, the wounds she bound, the limbs she stretched, and the broken and often fearful hearts she comforted and consoled. In the company of every sister for whom she had the privilege to care, she awakened – as did Francis of Assisi – to the mystery of Christ – Incarnate, Crucified and Resurrected.

On January 26, 1962, when our Lady of Angels Retirement Home first opened its doors, Sr. Peter began a new chapter in her life as nurse, mentor, supervisor and Director of Nursing until her so-called “retirement” in 1998. Known professionally and affectionately as always “running a tight ship,” Sr. Peter had a reputation for discipline, firmness and exactitude in equal measures with compassion, calmness and understanding. Recognized by the Illinois Health Care Association as a “Hero in Long Term Care” and fondly regarded by the family members of loved ones for whom she cared, in some cases, generation after generation, Sr. Peter set a very high standard for what it meant to be a nurse and, even more importantly, a Franciscan sister. Clearly, her joy in life came from serving others (Matt 25:40) yet it cannot be left unsaid, that a satisfying game of Skip-Po, Bingo or a Cubs win also played a part in living out the Joy of the Gospel.

Recalling the proverb, “If you do what you love, you will never work a day in your life,” it can be said with some certitude that Sr. Peter, despite all appearances to the contrary, never worked a day in her life. Always taking to heart the question and command of the Risen Lord to Peter (Jn 21:16), she gave herself in love and lovingly tended the sheep entrusted to her care. By her example, may we be inspired to do the same. Alleluia, Alleluia.

Sister M. Peter Didier, OSF

April 18, 1921— June 27, 2016

<i>Born:</i>	April 18, 1921
<i>Parents:</i>	Aloysius Didier and Emma (Geimer) Didier
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 5, 1939
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 12, 1940
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1942
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 12, 1945
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	June 27, 2016

Ministry History

1942-1943	Student: College of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois
1943-1944	Teacher: Religion, Algebra, General Science, Chemistry; Sacred Heart, Englewood, Chicago, Illinois
1944-1945	Student: College of St. Francis; Joliet
1945-1950	Teacher: Algebra, Geometry, Biology, Homemaking, Home Nursing; St. Francis Academy, Joliet
1950-1953	Student: St. Joseph School of Nursing, Joliet
1953-1962	Nurse: Hospital Case Work; Infirmary III, St. Francis Convent, Joliet
1962-1969	Nurse: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
1969-1970	Head Nurse: Lay Side, Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
1970-1973	Nurse: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
1973-1998	Director of Nursing Service: Lay Infirmary, Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
1998-2016	Community Service: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet

<i>Wake:</i>	Tuesday, July 5, 2016, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Prayer Service:</i>	Tuesday, July 5, 2016, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Mass of Christian Burial:</i>	Tuesday, July 5, 2016, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Burial:</i>	Wednesday, July 6, 2016, leaving Our Lady of Angels at 9:00 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Interment:</i>	Section 8, Lot 354, Grave 11, Resurrection Cemetery
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	By her parents, Aloysius Didier and Emma (Geimer) Didier; her brothers: James, Aloysius, Herbert and Arnold Didier; her sisters: Sr. M. Ambrose, Sr. M. Johanna, Sr. Mary Therese and Pauline Krueger
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her brothers: Jerome and Paul (Lisa) Didier; her sisters: Lorraine Schuetz, Marcella Merriman, Barbara Flynn and her sister-in-law, Mary Sue (Herbert) Didier

Rest in Peace, Sister Peter!