

SISTER M. ALVERNA TONELLI O.S.F. (Josephine) 687

Born: March 19, 1911 in South Wilmington, IL
Parents: Theodore and Catherine (Pomatto) Tonelli
Postulancy: February 2, 1927
Novitiate: August 12, 1927
First Profession: August 12, 1929
Final Profession: August 12, 1932

Died: Sunday, July 14, 1991 at 4:15 a.m.
at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home



Ministry:

1929 - 1936 St. Mary, Columbus, OH, Grades 3, 4, 6, 7 & 8
1936 - 1942 St. Clement, Chicago, IL, Grade 8, Mathematics,
French, Shorthand, Religion
1942 - 1943 St. Mary, Columbus, OH, English, Mathematics
1943 - 1964 Marybrook Academy, Maumee, OH, English, Religion
Mathematics, Business Training, Superior & Principal
1964 - 1965 ✓ St. Francis Academy, Joliet, IL,
1965 - 1968 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, Superior, Record Keeping
1968 - 1983 ✓ St. Francis Academy, Joliet, IL, Administration
Assistant, Office Work
January 1983 Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Retired
1983 - 1991 Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Retired

Wake: Tuesday, July 16, 1991 from 2:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Prayer Service at 4:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Angels, Joliet

Mass of Christian Burial: Tuesday, July 16, 1991 at 7 p.m.

Burial: Wednesday, July 17, 1991 at 9:00 a.m.
Interment at Resurrection Cemetery

Survived by her sister: Sister M. Theodore Tonelli, O.S.F. and numerous
cousins.

*For those who have been faithful, O Lord,
life is not ended, but merely changed.*

Early Sunday morning, July 14, 1991, at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, our Sister Alverna Tonelli was born to life eternal.

Sister Alverna had waited patiently for death, experiencing the suffering and frustration of increasing frailty and inability to communicate. She was eager to meet her God, and her death came gently and quietly as she slept.

Josephine was born on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1911. She was born in South Wilmington, Illinois to her Italian parents Catherine and Theodore. There were three children in the family, Josephine, Theodore (who died as an infant), and our own Sister Theodore. Both parents desired a religious vocation for themselves at one time, and later prayed that their daughters might be called to religious life. Their prayers were answered! Our Congregation has been blessed by the presence of the Tonelli daughters. In a special way we extend our love and sympathy to Sister Theodore, ever devoted sister, who through the years shared ministry and community living with Sister Alverna, and who these past years kept such faithful vigil at her bedside.

Sister Alverna entered the Congregation in 1927 when she was sixteen years old, and lived to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee of sixty years in 1989. She once wrote, "When I was a seventh grader, our teacher, Sister Ildephonse had us write a composition on 'What I Want to be When I Grow Up'. Without any hesitancy, I declared, 'I'm going to be a Sister!'" And when she did arrive at 520 Plainfield, Sister Ildephonse was the new postulant mistress who welcomed her former pupil and offered her the bonnet and cape. In 1979 she wrote, "Religious life has meant much to me. Never for anything in the world would I exchange what treasure is mine...a call to be Franciscan."

Sister Alverna was a talented woman who generously offered her gifts in active ministry for fifty-two years until her retirement to Our Lady of Angels in 1983. She was an educator, teaching practically all levels of elementary and secondary education. She served the Congregation in leadership positions as Principal and Superior. She spent fifteen years at St. Francis Academy, working in the business office.

The ministry that seemed to capture her heart was experienced at Marybrook Academy in Maumee, Ohio. At age thirty-two, in 1943, Sister Alverna began a ministry that would last for twenty-one years. Marybrook was a year-round residential school program for adolescent girls with behavior problems. She wrote, "At Marybrook I was with the so-called delinquent girls. For many of the girls, Marybrook was the only home they



have ever known. I estimate over 1000 girls passed through the Home while I was there." In her quiet, yet determined way, she entered the lives of these girls. She was teacher, disciplinarian, counselor, mother. Through her guidance many of these girls learned business skills and were helped in finding employment after they left Marybrook. Many of them kept contact with their teacher through these years. She wrote, "It was the saddest experience of my life when, as principal, I had to close Marybrook in 1964."

Our Sisters speak with loving respect about Sister Alverna. They describe her as a prayerful woman, dedicated, gentle but determined, ever generous, and calm (even when the Marybrook girls set fire to the drapes.)

Sister Alverna, we thank you for your sixty-two years as our Sister. You leave us the legacy of faithful dedication, especially to adolescent girls, and a deep love for the "treasure" you found in your Franciscan vocation. Remember us your Sisters, as we rejoice with you in the fullness of life you now experience for all eternity. Amen. Alleluia.