



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

On the afternoon of October 22, 2012, our Sister Grace Straub found herself counted among those blessed servants whom the Master found waiting upon his arrival (Lk 12:37). Returning to God with graciousness all that she had graciously received, she died as she had lived, welcoming the gift of God, revealing his handiwork, and entering ever more deeply into the mystery of what it means to be created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph 2:9-10).

Born to her loving parents, Edwin and Alta (Kirkpatrick) Straub, on November 10, 1934, Grace was the fourth of five children. Baptized and educated at St. Peter's Parish in Mansfield, Ohio, she came under the influence of the Joliet Franciscan spirit as a child. From an early age, Grace, together with her sisters Rita and Helen, was mindful of the fragility and vulnerability of life. The death of her infant brother, Philip, and the special needs of her beloved sister, Patty, made her particularly sensitive to the preciousness of each person entrusted to her care.

Moved by the desire to be an educator *and* a Franciscan sister, Grace's vocational paths converged as she ventured forward into adulthood with her characteristic sense of simplicity and joy. Entering the Postulancy of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate in January of 1953, she was received into the Novitiate in August of the same year and given the religious name of Gretchen. Making her first profession of vows on August 12, 1955, she was assigned soon thereafter to the wonderful world of first and third graders, a treasured world that she would weave her way in and out of for many years to come. Professing her final vows on August 13, 1958, Sister Gretchen continued to grow in her own convictions about the spirit-filled dynamics of teaching and learning as she herself completed studies in Sociology at the then College of St. Francis. Engaged by the challenges and opportunities of a world and a Church in the process of unprecedented change and renewal, she responded single-mindedly and courageously to her missionary calling with an unwavering heart full of love, solicitude, gentle humor and humility. In a 1963 letter to her classmates, she reflected upon her experience of being a "slow learner" in language school and the difficulties she faced when required on a weekly basis to tell a story in Portuguese to her fellow students. "Boy, does the language ever get murdered then! I usually end up winning the prize for the most errors – but – someone has to be the others' consolation!!"

As one of the founding Franciscan missionaries in Santa Helena de Goiás, Irmã Gretchen planted many seeds during her decade of ministry in Brazil. In August of 2011, as the Congregation celebrated the concluding liturgy of its 145th anniversary, it was with tears of great joy that she counted herself blessed, like Simeon (Lk 2:29), as she sat in the balcony of Our Lady of Angels and witnessed those seeds continuing to bear much good fruit in and through the lives of her sisters in Brazil. This took on even greater meaning as Irmã Teresinha and Sister Mary Ann were among the Sisters and OLA staff who tenderly accompanied Sister Grace during her final months, days and hours. Until this day in Santa Helena, a vestige of Irmã Gretchen's lasting influence is still evidenced in the noteworthy Palmer method hand-writing of her former students as well as their children and grand-children.

Alleluia!



Sister Grace Straub, OSF

It is said of Sister Grace that she was "as serious about piety as she was about the Golden Rule." Whether it was a novena of prayers that was needed or a dozen freshly-baked cakes for a parish event, she could be counted upon to deliver whatever was asked of her. Described as a fun-filled teaser, with a straight face and a sense of German-Irish wit, she could tell an incredible tale and convince everyone that it was true. On a playground or pathway one could easily identify Sister Grace's location as the place where the largest concentration of children could be found, drawn as if to a magnet with an incredible and affectionate gravitational pull. Recounting an experience of having to apologize to Sister Grace for a terrible misdeed, a former student wrote: "I closed my eyes. I couldn't bring myself to gaze at her, knowing that she knew. I was beside myself. Her eyes were flooded with tears, not the anger and disappointment I expected and deserved. 'Too many friendships end because people just can't say I'm sorry' were her words." Indeed, our Sister Grace embodied the ideal of what it means to be "truly present" to those whom we love and serve in God's name as sister, teacher, story-teller, reconciler and friend.

Always inclined to trust in God's "holy manner of working," our "Gracie" – as she was affectionately called – possessed a seemingly inexhaustible generosity of spirit even in the midst of those heart-rending experiences when God begged back from her the precious gifts of beloved family members, of cherished friends and classmates, of a missionary calling and an envisioned future, of a generative ministry of teaching and a lovingly devoted ministry of care-giving and, ultimately, the countless remembrances and memories of a lifetime. Unfaltering in her Franciscan conviction, that "it is in giving that we receive," our sister Grace leaves to us a parting gift, a fundamental lesson to be learned from the legacy of her life, an insight which is perfectly captured in a passage from Annie Lamott's book, *Traveling Mercies: I do not understand the mystery of grace – only that it meets us where we are and does not leave us where it found us.*¹

Holding fast to this insight and confidently sharing in the belief that it is in dying that we are born to eternal life, let us return to God the gift of our Sister Grace, saying with grateful hearts full of joy: *Obrigada, Senhor! Alleluia, Alleluia!*

¹As quoted in *Becoming Catholic Again* (Loyola Press, 2012) by Catherine Wiecher Brunell, a graduate of St. Peter's – Mansfield and a devoted former third-grader of Sr. Grace.

Sister Grace Straub, OSF
November 10, 1934 — October 22, 2012

Born: November 10, 1934
Parents: Edwin Maurice and Alta (Kirkpatrick) Straub
Postulancy: January 31, 1953
Novitiate: August 13, 1953
First Profession: August 12, 1955
Final Profession: August 13, 1958
Entered New Life: October 22, 2012

Ministry History

1955—1957 Teacher: Grade 3, St. Ann, Lansing, Illinois
1957-1959 Teacher: Grade 1, St. Ann, Lansing
1959-1963 Teacher: Grade 1, St. Michael, Worthington, Ohio
1963-1967 Santa Helena, Brazil
1967-1968 Teacher: Grade 1, St. Procopius, Chicago, Illinois
1968-1970 Santa Helena, Brazil
1970-1972 Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil
1973 Pastoral Ministry, Sao José, Goiânia
1974 Motherhouse
1974-1978 Teacher: Grade 3, St. Edward, Ashland, Ohio
1978-1991 Teacher: Grade 3, St. Peter, Mansfield, Ohio
1991-1996 Teacher (part-time): Grade 3, St. Peter, Mansfield
Family Care
1996-1998 Family Ministry
1998-1999 Teacher, Family Ministry: St. Mary, Mansfield
1999-2006 Teacher: St. Joseph, Crestline, Ohio
2006-2013 Community Service, Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, Illinois

Wake: Friday, October 26, 2012, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
Prayer Service: Friday, October 26, 2012, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
Mass of Christian Burial: Friday, October 26, 2012, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
Burial: Saturday, October 27, 2012, leaving Our Lady of Angels at 9:00 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
Interment: Section 8, Lot 360, Grave 3, Resurrection Cemetery
Predeceased by: By her parents, Edwin Maurice and Alta (Kirkpatrick) Straub, her brother Philip and her sister, Rita Ann Roycraft
Survived by: Her sisters, Helen Sevits and Patricia Straub

Rest in Peace, Sister Grace