

SISTER LORETTA CRAGGS O.S.F. (Joseph) 695

Born: June 8, 1919, Columbus, OH
Parents: Frank and Marie (Durthaler) Craggs
Postulancy: September 8, 1938
Novitiate: August 12, 1939
First Profession: August 12, 1941
Final Profession: August 12, 1944
Died: Wednesday, December 25, 1991 at
Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet



Ministry:

1941 - 1942 College of St. Francis, Joliet, IL, Chapel and General Work
1942 - 1943 Guardian Angel Home, Joliet, IL, Assistant Kindergarten Prefect and Teacher
January 1943 St. Francis Convent, Joliet, IL, Community Sewing Room
1943 - 1945 St. Francis de Sales, Chicago, IL, Grades 2 & 3
1945 - 1946 St. Clement, Chicago, IL, Grade 2
1946 - 1947 St. Bernard, Joliet, IL, Grades 2 & 3
1947 - 1951 Catechetical Center, Ladd, IL, Religion Grades 1 - 4
1951 - 1952 Guardian Angel Home, Joliet, IL, Prefect - Junior Boys
1952 - 1956 Corpus Christi, Columbus, OH, Grades 1 & 2
1956 - 1963 St. Mary, Fairfield, AL, Grade 1
1963 - 1965 St. Michael, Brunswick, MI, Grades 1 & 2
1965 - 1966 St. Mary, Green Creek, IL, Grades 1 & 2
1966 - 1967 St. Joseph, Freeport, IL, Grade 1
1967 - 1975 St. Peter, Mansfield, OH, Grade 4
1975 - 1977 Corpus Christi, Columbus, OH, Ministry to Aged and Infirm and Substitute Teaching
1977 - 1983 St. Mary, Shelby, OH, Principal
1983 - 1984 St. Mary, Shelby, OH, Parish Ministry
1984 - 1985 Corpus Christi, Columbus, OH, Teaching
1985 - 1987 St. Francis Academy Residence, Joliet, IL, Driver/Portress
1987 - 1991 St. Mary, Columbus, OH, Driver, General Work
May 25, 1991 Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Retired

Wake: Sunday, December 29, 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: Sunday, December 29, 1991 at 7:00 p.m.

Burial: Monday, December 30, 1991 at 9:00 a.m.
Interment at Resurrection Cemetery

Sister Loretta suffered very much - especially in her last illness with a cancer, that showed no mercy - that exacted every ounce of courage that she had and every ounce of strength that she had. But, this too must not have been a surprise to Loretta, for in June, 1942, Sister Loretta wrote to Mother Thomasine, OSF, and she requested to renew her vows, she wrote, "... (I wish to renew in order) to serve God faithfully until death." "I pray that I may continue in the state (religious) until death, so that I may reign triumphant among the number of Franciscan Saints in heaven." You see, she knew the price of the pearl long ago. And therefore, with the renewal of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience she won heaven in 1991.

A year ago Christmas Day, 25 December 1990 - Sister Loretta wrote a general letter to her relatives and friends. She spoke of her cancer being stable and of her desire to celebrate her 50th Jubilee as a religious woman. She wished to be present for the celebration in Joliet. And that wish came true. Now, on the very next Christmas, 1991, the God of homecoming, welcomed her home, and the words of Francis of Assisi rang loudly and clearly for her:

"Whoever will observe these things shall be filled with the blessing of the Most High Father in Heaven, and on earth with the blessing of His beloved son, with the Holy Spirit, and with all virtues and with all the saints..."

And I, Brother Francis, ... confirm to you within and without their most Holy Blessing." AMEN!

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

The Christmas morning Mass had but ended at Our Lady of Angels, when Sister Vivian Whitehead (The President of the Congregation) visited with Sister Loretta Craggs, and told Loretta that it was the birthday of a child - who was God, and that the Congregation (its members) loved Loretta. Then Sister Vivian went on to give her blessing to others at OLA - and was interrupted with the message that Sister Loretta was dying.

So it was that Sister Loretta Craggs, who became a Franciscan in 1938 now received an eternal invitation to the birthday celebration of the Child-God on the 25 December 1991 - in the young morning, at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home in Joliet, Illinois.

Sister Loretta Craggs was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1919 to Frank and Marie Craggs. At the time of her death, she was the last member of her immediate family. Her parents, her two Sisters, and her twin brother, John were all waiting for her at the doors of Heaven.

Sister Loretta was educated at St. Mary's in Columbus, Ohio. And, in accordance with her destiny, St. Mary's in Columbus was her last mission assignment in Ohio. Sister Loretta lived at St. Mary's until the 25 May 1991 and at that time, she was very ill.

They say, "...that there is something special about the OSF women Religious in Columbus." I believe it. Let me tell you about the last day that Loretta was living at St. Mary's. While she waited for Sister Lynn Domina to come and pick her up and take her to Joliet in May, 1991. The Columbus community waited with her - it was a love wait. At noon they prayed the Angelus together. Even then - they (The Columbus women) foretold her death - on Christmas Day. And then, when she was in the car, and the memories of Columbus were about to companion her, these women lifted their hands in blessing - The blessing of Francis of Assisi, knowing that all their love, wishes and hopes that they had for Loretta were encased in the words of the blessing.

I would think that the blessing that lingered in Loretta's heart and memory - as she drove toward Illinois - was coupled with the memory of thirty-eight years of teaching and of being principal. Perhaps it was mixed with the memories of her time as prefect at GAH, Sacristan at CSF, seamstress at the Motherhouse, as minister to the aged at Corpus Christi, Columbus and in Shelby, Ohio. And these memories stood side-by-side with her graciousness to be a driver for our Sisters wherever the need arose.

