

# **Sister Miriam David (Catherine Veronica Peterson), CSC**

July 5, 1923–April 14, 2018

---

**These memories were shared by Sister Catherine Osimo, CSC, at the funeral on April 18, 2018.**

Imagine Sister Miriam David's family portrait, from another time and place, circa 1951. Her father, David Peterson, is dressed in his best suit, but looks a little uncomfortable, being more of a hard-working former carpenter and later, the operator of a freight trucking business in Boise, Idaho. He sits next to his wife, prim and proper Martha Weaver, looking as if she just came from Sunday mass, back in the day when women wore hats. She was a former elementary teacher from Chicago. The parents are surrounded by ten adult children, half of them in clerical garb. Sister Miriam David is dressed in the habit of a Sister of the Holy Cross, having entered the Congregation in 1941. Standing alongside her are her three sisters who are all veiled as Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. One of the six brothers, in Roman collar, is a priest of the Diocese of Boise and the other five are stalwart married men raising families. Ironically their father, for whatever reason, was alienated for years from the Catholic Church until near his death.

Sister Miriam David was dedicated to her family and felt she needed to help care for her brothers in their last illnesses while she was still involved in ministry. However, her special mission, she wrote, was to encourage priests. She was associated with them in parochial elementary schools from 1944 to 1991, throughout Arizona, California, Idaho, Utah, and Washington. She also ministered with priest chaplains at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise, Idaho, in her last years of full-time ministry—in home health and patient support from 1991 to 2008. And she would have included the many priest chaplains here at Saint Mary's as well.

In November 1940, her own pastor at Boise's St. Mary's Church, Father John J. Creegan, had written that Catherine Peterson, nicknamed "Kitty" by her dad, was "a young lady of excellent habits, of a fine family and is highly respected in the community." The pastor felt very safe in highly recommending her to the Sisters of the Holy Cross as a candidate for religious life—as did Sister M. Coaina (Mulligan), CSC, in 1941, who had

known her from the commercial courses in which Catherine was very adept at St. Teresa's Academy, Boise. "She is steady and responsible, and should fill her place in an admirable manner in the ranks of Holy Cross. God bless her and give her every grace to persevere in God's great work entrusted to us."

Seventy-seven years later, Sister Miriam David had truly persevered in an admirable manner, dying at Saint Mary's Convent at the motherhouse where she has lived since 2008, fulfilling her ministry of prayer and service to the larger family of God.

Photographs of Sister Miriam David portray only the barest of smiles, whether in the traditional habit or in contemporary dress. She looks as prim and proper as her mother in that family portrait of 1951. Yet Sister Patricia Riley, who lived with Sister in Colusa, California, remembers the fun they had together as elementary educators who also planned plays, visited homes and played ball. We are told Sister had an infectious laugh. Then, by God, she must have smiled more broadly than in those pictures!

Sister M. Luella (Van Dorn) recalls her friendship with Sister whom she simply called "Miriam." The two were friends since their days together in ministry in Salt Lake City, Utah, where they enjoyed going places together in the city. Later, when the telephone was the best way to connect, Miriam's greeting was always, "What's up, Luella?" Sounds like the woman was not always so prim and proper. According to Sister Luella, Miriam always expected something to be going on in the simple everyday routine of a nun's life and to find joy and pleasure in what already happened—or what might happen next. Simple pleasures included yard sales on early Saturday mornings. Or going to a Boise park on a hot day and dipping into a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken for lunch while taking in the beauty of creation—just living in that moment.

The woman who got up early on Saturdays for those yard sales, also worked weekdays on a 2:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. shift at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Boise. She got up so early during the week because she wanted to get the paperwork and assignments ready for the Home Care nurses by the time they started their rounds. The former commercial student and later whiz in accounting and business administration, had figured out that the best time to have unfettered

access to the computers and the copy machine was when no one else was around! No doubt, she also found the quiet hours very energizing, being an introvert.

She was a prayerful person who trusted in the Lord in other quiet hours. Her grandniece, Lori NeSmith, writes that one of Sister Miriam's favorite scripture passages was Philippians 3:20, "For us, our homeland is in heaven." Sister Miriam endured suffering patiently and calmly. She was grateful to have lived long enough to have cared for all her brothers in their last days. Not surprisingly, she worked into her late eighties and died at 94 years old, the youngest of the ten siblings. Now she is at home with her family, a priestly woman in her own right, interceding for all of us. Now she is part of a larger picture, one framed by a vast communion of saints. And now, it is time for this community to accompany her body to that quiet place where the rest of our friends abide with Our Lady of Peace, Our Mother of Sorrows.

**Written by Sister Catherine Osimo, CSC**