

# **Memento for Sister M. Mildred Louise, CSC**

## **(Mildred Louise Keegan)**

January 11, 1919 - February 2, 2019

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**These memories were shared by Sister Mary Louise Full, CSC, at the funeral on February 7, 2019.**

Knowing Sister Mildred Louise's love for Africa, this Ugandan proverb seems to be a fitting introduction to the woman we knew and loved: "A woman is never old when it comes to the dance she knows!" Doesn't that just sound like Sister Mildred? She never missed a beat. Three weeks ago, we celebrated her 100th birthday! She loved every minute of having her family with her as well as her Saint Mary's community. We all feel blessed having had the opportunity to get to know the Keegan, Kane and Carroll families over the years and having Pat (nephew Patrick Kane) here with us today.

Sister Mildred Louise, Mildred Louise Keegan, was the daughter of Harry and Mary Keegan, the ninth of ten children. Born in Washington, D.C., Mildred loved being a "Washingtonian!" At the time she was born, the family lived on "Capitol Hill" not far from Saint Cecilia's Academy. Later the family moved to Brookland, the section of the city near The Catholic University of America. On a moment's notice, Sister Mildred would readily volunteer to be a companion to anyone traveling to Washington. Unfortunately, in recent years, due to her declining health, this was not possible.

Sister Mil, or Millie, as she was affectionately called, met the Sisters of the Holy Cross when attending Saint Cecilia's Academy. When it came time to discern her call to a religious community, she found Holy Cross to be more family oriented, friendlier with one another and open-minded, and most important of all to her, they were always kind to one another. Her sister, Lorena, told her about a classmate at Saint Patrick's Academy, Sister Monica Clare Gaffney, CSC, who had an older sister who was a Holy Cross Sister, Sister M. Clotile Gaffney, CSC. One thing led to another and Sisters Clotile and Monica Clare helped her get ready for Saint Mary's.

A woman of many talents, Sister Mildred had a wonderful life. Everyone with whom I spoke mentioned her kindness. She was generous, adaptable and enjoyed having a good time; she cared about people, had a sense of

humor and could make others laugh! Mildred was hospitable; she had a way of putting people at ease, making others feel welcomed and at home. A very practical person, Mildred would “call it as she saw it!”

The first eight years of her ministry as a Holy Cross Sister began as a teacher at Saint Paul’s in New York City, followed by several years teaching at Blessed Sacrament School in Washington, D.C. Among her students at Blessed Sacrament was Bill Nickerson, brother of Sister Ruth Marie Nickerson, CSC as well as Jack and Ron Sinclair, the brothers of Sister Ann Therese Sinclair, CSC.

In 1949, she responded to an invitation to minister in São Paul, Brazil, which was just being launched as a new ministry. “Here I am Lord, send me!” In this new mission, Sister Mildred was able to put her many talents to good use as she served as a teacher, principal, accountant, catechist and driver of the “brown community car.” It is said of her that she generously responded to any and all requests. Sister M. Francine (Klein), CSC, remembers Mildred picking her up at the airport when she first arrived in Brazil. Sister Aline Marie (Steuer), CSC, remembered Sister Mildred helping her adjust to her new reality and helping her with Portuguese. Sister Mary Josephine Delany, CSC, was able to contact Regina Carvalho, who worked with Sister Mildred at the Colégio Santa Maria in the finance office. Regina has fond memories of her mentor Sister Mildred being tranquil and very professional in supervising her work. She was most gracious and calm in dealing with the parents of students who had difficulties paying tuition.

In 1963, she returned to the states where she was assigned as the assistant superior in the Juniorate the first year Regina Hall opened and oversaw many of us here today. She was regarded as a “breath of fresh air” having just returned from the missions; a woman with a lot of common sense who brought a new spirit with all the changes to religious life as a result of Vatican II. At this same time, Sister Mildred was pursuing her master’s degree in theology at Saint Mary’s Graduate School of Sacred Theology.

Soon after, she went to Guatemala for a summer immersion experience in Central America, helping in a catechetical program and taking parish census. On her return, Sister was missioned to Uganda where Holy Cross Sisters were invited by Holy Cross Bishop Vincent McCauley, CSC, who requested sisters to assist with the education and formation of indigenous sisters. “Here I am Lord, send me!”

Her first two years in Uganda were spent working with the Association

of Religious of Uganda establishing a formation program. Due to increasing violence, the program was unable to continue in its initial location. Subsequently, she was reassigned to Saint Kalemba's Training Center in Ibanda, where she shared community with Sister Patricia Gantz, CSC. The focus of their ministries was the training of lay catechists and the mentoring of others to ensure that the programs would continue. With increasing violence in the area (this was during the reign of Idi Amin), the sisters moved to Fort Portal.

Father Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, who visited Uganda from time to time, used to mention that he always liked having Sister "Millie" Louise drive him as he knew he would arrive for his appointments on time.

Returning to the states in 1972, Sister Mildred served in a variety of ministries. At Mount Carmel Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, Sister served as the coordinator of pastoral care. Returning to Saint Mary's, she continued to minister in pastoral care until her declining health limited her ability to do so.

Sister Mildred had a joyful spirit and enjoyed her many assignments. She loved people; she was inclusive and accepting of others. She found it easy to engage others in conversation. She lived a full life. Her missionary assignments to Brazil and Uganda were life-giving experiences for her.

I don't think it is a coincidence that Mildred was baptized on February 2, 1919; she entered the community on February 2, 1938, made her first profession of vows on February 2, 1941, and died on February 2, 2019. Somehow, I think our Blessed Lady was deeply involved in Sister Mildred Louise's life. Like the prophetess Anna, she left this life giving thanks to God.

To bring Sister Millie home, we go to her Irish heritage, which sustained her throughout her life. We conclude offering this Irish Prayer:

May the good earth be soft under you

When you rest upon it,

May it rest easy over you when

At last, you lay out under it,

And may it rest so lightly over you

That your soul may be out

From under it quickly, and up, and off,

And be on its way to God.

Until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.