

# **Sister M. Cyril, CSC**

(Irene Dubala)

February 26, 1926–March 20, 2021

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**These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Frances B. O'Connor, CSC, who read them at Sister Cyril's Mass of Resurrection on March 26, 2021.**

What came to my mind as I reflected on the life of Sister Cyril was the great loss our Congregation has experienced with the recent deaths of both Sister Miriam P. Cooney and Sister Cyril, two women who excelled in mathematics and, in Cyril's case, science. They were both excellent teachers revered by their students.

I came to know Sister Cyril well in 1997, when she and my sister, Sister M. Anna Clare (O'Connor), CSC, began their ministry at Angela House in Michigan City, Indiana. At the time, Sister Cyril was living at Saint Mary's Convent and teaching at Marquette High School in Michigan City.

Since she did not drive, she either walked or depended on public transportation to get to and from the high school. So, when Sister Anna Clare asked her to join her at Angela House, which was adjacent to Marquette, she gladly accepted.

What began as a partnership of convenience grew into a strong and lasting friendship after a few personality struggles and some much-needed dialogue!

Becky Drury and I worked with the two of them from the beginning to adapt what had been a convent for approximately 25 sisters into a retreat house. Over the next nine years, we assisted in preparing meals for their retreats and served on their board.

During this time, we both got to know Cyril well and also were able to observe her with her students on several occasions. It was easy to see how she made an impact on the lives of her students, giving many of them an interest in both science and mathematics and introducing them to concepts they had never heard before.

Although quiet in demeanor, Cyril had a good sense of humor and could laugh at herself. Once, Becky and I were getting ready to hang wallpaper in one of the bathrooms at Angela House and we asked Cyril to measure and tell us how many rolls we would need. After much deliberation, she came up with a number six times more than was required. When challenged, she said it was just a matter of moving the decimal one space!

Cyril was a perfectionist and would work on a problem until it was solved. That is what attracted her to Sudoku, a logic-based, number-placement puzzle. Her retirement years were filled with solving very complex Sudoku puzzles and her second love, reading Harry Potter books.

Cyril read every Harry Potter book multiple times and watched all the movies. To say she was addicted to Harry Potter is no exaggeration!

Perhaps Cyril's greatest personal asset was her expectation of goodness in her students, friends and other sisters. To a casual observer visiting her classroom for a brief period, her teaching style may not have seemed much different than that of other teachers in nearby classrooms.

But anyone who studied her could not help but notice what the highest level of teaching excellence looked like. It was clear watching her tutor students that she truly loved teaching. She had a delivery that was both gentle and powerful at the same time. She had command of the classroom and had control of every student's attention.

Her ability to accomplish this was rooted in a style she had of making every lesson incredibly interesting and profoundly important to each and every student. Every mind was important to her, and she felt it worth her time to search for just the right keys to open that mind. And when she found those keys, she used them effectively to make learning exciting and pleasurable.

Cyril had a real love for and interest in her subject and in helping other people, which was continually apparent. Every student's success and concerns were important to her. It was evident how deeply she cared about the relationships she had with her students, colleagues, friends and family. Her whole disposition was one of kindness. She was a great example of patience and kindness.

Perhaps the reason she was so respected by those she encountered was because she showed so much respect for everyone else—a lesson for all of us!

It has been said that, "You carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you." Sister Cyril certainly left an indelible imprint on the hundreds of students, family and friends she encountered.

We are blessed to have shared her life as a Sister of the Holy Cross.