

In Memoriam

Sister Joseph Edwards

Sister Marie Cooper

Born on April 18, 1916, Norah Edwards would travel the world as a missionary as she traveled in time for over a century. Born in Lawn, Newfoundland, our Sister Joseph grew up in a warm family with her parents, Norah and Andrew, who were strong in the faith they passed on to their children. Norah was attuned to the workings of the Spirit at a young age, and after meeting her cousin, who was a religious, she felt attracted to religious life in distant missions.

When she left school, Norah first went to work near home, earning \$5.00 a month, as it was during the depression years. Seeking a better job, she went to the French Island of St. Pierre, off the Newfoundland coast. There, she not only succeeded in getting a better paying job at the post office, she also met the Cluny Sisters. Through her association with these expansive and welcoming women, Norah discerned her vocation to Cluny, and looked forward to serving in far distant missions.

At 20 years of age Norah bid farewell to her family, and set out for the Cluny Central Novitiate in Paris, France. In her memoirs she wrote, "It was exciting to meet all the different nationalities all animated by the same ideal, all striving to acquire the spirit of our foundress, Anne Marie Javouhey. Whenever missionary sisters arrived in the Mother House from Africa, Madagascar, the South Seas or elsewhere they would come to the Novitiate and we would eagerly listen to their interesting stories. We all longed to go and join in these distant apostolates."

On March 20, 1939, Sister Joseph pronounced her first vows, and later that day, all the newly professed sisters came together with the General Superior and the councilors to receive their first mission. She remembered it well: "When my turn came I was told I was going to Chandernagore. I thought to myself, Dear Lord, that must be in Brittany, and I was just longing to go to the foreign missions! As we shared the sign of peace, one of the counsellors said to me, 'you know, you will be very near to Calcutta,' and then my heart jumped for joy as then I knew I was being sent to India."



Photo: Sr. Marie Cooper

Sister Joseph of Our Lady Edwards
Born into this life April 18, 1916
Religious Profession March 20, 1939
Born into eternity November 2, 2017

Sister Joseph served in India for twelve years, where she loved her ministry. When the climate took a toll on her health, she went back to the Mother House to recuperate. After a few months, she was missioned to the United States, serving briefly in Rhode Island and then at St. Joseph's Home for Boys in Philadelphia, PA where she endeared herself to the boys, who lovingly called her "Mama Joe", for 23 years.

When St. Joseph's Home closed in 1976, Sister Joseph came back to Rhode Island serving in Stella Maris, Newport, and then as secretary to the Vicar for Religious of the Diocese of Providence until her retirement. In 2006, after an illness, Sister Joseph moved to St. Clare Home in Newport, which became her home for 11 years.

Over the years, Sister Joseph kept in touch with many of the boys who lived at St. Joseph Home and remembered them always in her prayer intentions. When many of us gathered in 2016 on occasion of her 100th Birthday, some of her "boys" joined in the celebration. Her heart was still full of gratitude for the gift of her missionary vocation and those she was privileged to serve.

Sister Joseph was not only our "matriarch", she was a faithful, prayerful religious and loving community member: she is deeply missed!