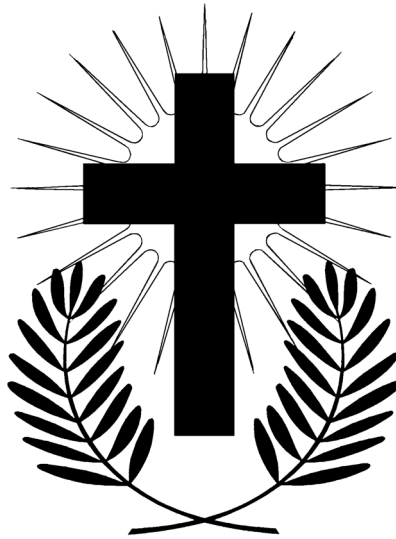


SISTER JEROME

OF THE SACRED HEART

KEHOE



BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:

MAY 9, 1922

BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:

OCTOBER 15, 2005

Sister Jerome Kehoe
Province of U.S.A. & Canada
1922 –2005

Mary was born on 09 May 1922 in Clonjordan, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, into a family of seven children, four of whom became religious Sisters. Her parents, James Kehoe and Johanna Doyle transmitted their deep faith to their children. Mary would later love to tell about life on the farm which she loved. However, when she heard the call to religious and missionary life, she generously responded in spite of an alluring inheritance that she had been promised.

On 14 September 1944 she entered Gallen Priory, Ferbane, as a postulant and began her novitiate on 15 March 1945 with the name Sister Jerome of the Sacred Heart. She was professed on 08 December 1946 and in March 1947 she set sail for West Africa, delighted to go to the land so beloved by Mother Javouhey. In the isolated Gambian outpost of Basse she enjoyed great success with the children. She also took charge of the linen for the whole mission. But Basse was 300 miles up the Gambia River, far from civilization. When she became seriously ill the only thing her one companion could do was put her on a boat to Fulla Bang Tang where she had a better chance to get adequate health care. The medical personnel were not proficient, however and their attempt to do an appendectomy almost cost her her life. She was sent home to Ireland to recover. In Wexford, surgeons tried to undo the negative consequences of the surgery done in Africa, but it would be years before she completely recovered.

Once restored to health, she happily cared for the sick, a ministry that she herself said she truly loved, and she also hoped to train as a nurse eventually. From 1952 to 1955 she helped care for the sick in Woodlock Nursing Home, a place she always loved. But God had other plans for her.

In 1955 Sister Jerome was sent to the Province of U.S.A./Canada where she spent most of her religious life. Her first ministry was at the Cathedral Rectory, Providence, where her quiet dignity and sense of humor impressed the bishop and priests to whom our Sisters ministered. She served as portress, did housework and sewing. In 1963, yet another call sent her flying across the North American continent to Torrance, California, to the elementary students of St. Catherine Laboure School. Remembering this time, one of her companions writes, "What stands out in my memory about Sister Jerome is her great love of the children and her gentle ways with them." Other Sisters who taught with her as well as lay collaborators/parents and the children themselves often gave this same testimony.

In 1966 Sister Jerome was again called to cross the continent, this time traveling east and across the border into Canada. Except for a brief study sabbatical in San Diego in 1967, here she remained until her return to Ireland and her beloved Woodlock in June 2003. During this time, Sister Jerome showed her great spirit of simplicity by accepting to attend Teachers' College with much younger classmates in order to qualify for teaching in the Canadian system. This done, she remained faithful to her post, teaching the primary grades in St. Joseph's School, Hamilton, for 35 years.

Everywhere she went, people remember her gift for reaching out to everyone she met. Some were past pupils or their parents. Often they were people completely unknown to her but she engaged them in conversations that brought them joy, healing and peace. Her Saturday afternoon walks about town became legendary in Hamilton. A convert to Catholicism ascribes her coming into the church to Sister Jerome's falling in step with her as she walked along Herkimer Street and inviting her in. Her accounts of these walks at dinner were an apt reminder of our fundamental option for the poor.

No one was surprised when, upon retiring, she volunteered to teach at the Hamilton Detention Centre. Week after week, her cheerful

presence brought these young prisoners hope and the belief in new possibilities. Sister Jerome radiated hospitality. She spent hours listening compassionately to people marginalized by mental illness or weighed down by life's difficulties. She was a gracious hostess, offering warm hospitality to community guests, especially the Sisters' families.

In community Sister Jerome was always willing to render service. She was patient, kind and supportive, especially towards Sisters needing assistance. She shouldered her share of the housekeeping tasks, and seemed to enjoy taking her turn at cooking. After her retirement, she became even more involved until the very end when her health no longer allowed it.

Every life has its shadow side. When it came to making decisions, Sister Jerome could be very indecisive. In spite of her sense of humor, sometimes her companions dubbed her "Mariah" because she was so given to seeing the dark side of life. But she will ever be remembered as a true daughter of Mother Javouhey, solid in faith, loving the children, kind, compassionate and welcoming. (Some people thought she looked like the statue of our Blessed Mother in our dining room.)

No better witness to this truth could have been given other than the huge attendance at her memorial service at St. Joseph's parish in Hamilton. It was very obvious that she was much loved and appreciated by the people in the parish. There was a general gasp in the church when Fr. Jim Valk, C.R., announced her death to the congregation the morning after the community received the news. Phone calls, notes of sympathy and Mass cards spoke volumes about her impact here. The ladies of the knitting group that she had joined after retiring wept upon hearing the news, though some had feared initially that her presence in the group might put a damper on them.

On 12 September 2003, at the age of 81, sister Jerome came to Woodlock and for health reasons she was admitted to our Nursing Home. However, in no way did she look for any preferential

treatment. She joined the community for prayers and meals and was ever ready to help where a need arose, e.g. she replaced Sisters at reception. She continued to correspond with her friends who surely appreciated her prayers and encouragement.

Sister Jerome was a kind, gentle, prayerful sister who was esteemed by all. Even though she was always cheerful, it was obvious that her physical condition was precarious. On 13 September 2005 she went home to Wexford for a holiday. Here she joined her two sisters who are Mercy Sisters. But after a few days she became ill and had to be admitted to Wexford Hospital. On September 24, sister returned to Woodlock but never really regained her former strength.

On 15 October at 7:30 p.m., the good Lord took her to Himself. She died as she had lived, quietly and peacefully. Her nephew, Father Jim, concelebrated her Requiem Mass with the Woodlock curate; a packed congregation of her relatives and friends attended. May this good and faithful servant rest forever in the joy of her God who no doubt welcomed her with open arms.