

SISTER CARMEL

OF THE SACRED HEART

KEOGH



*BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:
AUGUST 8, 1920*

*BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:
FEBRUARY 25, 2013*

Sister Carmel Keogh
Province of U.S.A. & Canada
1920 - 2013

Sister Carmel Keogh was born in the center of Ireland, County Roscommon. Mary loved the beauty of her native land. Her family was deeply religious, three of eight children entered religious life.

On September 8, 1941, she entered Cluny Novitiate in Ferbane County Offaly, Ireland and in 1944 was professed. That same year, her ministry began with Teacher's College in England and then to Stafford, England where she began her teaching career with 8 and 9 year old students.

She found the challenge exciting and fulfilling, yet accepted enthusiastically a change of obedience to Scotland. However, her time in Scotland was short lived, because she was asked to board a ship and travel to Los Angeles, California in the United States. She would often tell the story of how because another sister, who was originally destined for the new mission in California became ill, she was asked to replace her. While initially surprised and a bit confused, she accepted this unexpected change of plans as the Will of God and whole-heartedly embraced the missionary call to leave the known for the unknown.

Thus, in 1951 after a week of sea-sickness in an ocean-liner, she arrived in New York and subsequently flew into Los Angeles to join other Sisters, who had come earlier to begin the Cluny presence in Wilmington, California.

The many humorous stories of misunderstandings because American students somehow did not speak the same "language" as the sisters, were a source of much laughter. Thus, began a long teaching career in the Province. For just one year, she taught Grade One at St. Peter and Paul School in Wilmington. Then in 1952 she was assigned to begin a new foundation at St. Catherine Laboure in neighboring Torrance, California. Once again, the challenges of a new mission greeted her. The convent was not ready for the sisters to occupy, so Sr. Carmel and

three other sisters lived in a house a distance from the school. They depended on the generosity of parishioners to drive them each morning and afternoon. Again, Sr. Carmel had detailed stories describing the challenges of those days, her telling of the events usually inspired laughter. Here she taught Grades 4, 5 and 6 while also being the principal of the school and the superior of the community. The school flourished in the “boom “ of the 50’s and 60’s in southern California and Sr. Carmel welcomed the wave of new students along with the other new sisters who came to southern California.

In 1963, she went from the sunny, warm climate of California to the changing seasons and cold winters on the east coast of the United States. For the next 16 years, Sister Carmel resided in Cluny Convent on Brenton Road in Newport, Rhode Island and ministered in Cluny School. Sister Carmel served not only as the Principal, she also taught Grade 8. In 1975, Sister Carmel became the Superior of the Provincial House community. The beauty surrounding Cluny Convent brought her often to prayer in the chapel, where she would often sit listening to the chirping of the hundreds of small birds in the large tree outside the chapel windows.

In 1979 her missionary availability took her back to Wilmington, California. Here she taught Grade 4 at Sts. Peter and Paul School while also being involved in religious education classes. For Sr. Carmel to teach was not only her response to the Will of God through obedience, but a true delight—she loved teaching. She was always interested in the current political and historical events in the world and in particularly in the United States. She followed political happenings and could connect them to historical events of both the United States and Europe. She could recall from memory dates and events from American and Irish history.

After two short years, Sister Carmel returned to Torrance, for 10 years. During this time she taught Grade 4 as a part-time teacher in St. Catherine Laboure School. While her physical energy began to lag, she was a partner teacher who was much appreciated by those with whom she shared a classroom. In 1991, Sister Carmel returned to Newport, Rhode Island. Prior to returning to Ireland in 1998, she served as

sacristan in the Provincial House Community. Her meticulous care of the linens and sacred vessels were as important a ministry as when she was a Principal and Provincial Councilor.

At this time, she continued teaching as she worked with individual students and small tutoring groups in Cluny School. Being available for any service, she was often the substitute secretary for the school and at the end of the school day visited the sick. She always had time for a chat and would engage sisters and visitors over a cup of tea with the stories of the past and regale them with some comical event in the school or while visiting the shut-ins

We have spoken of Sr. Carmel's long teaching ministry. We need also to look, retrospectively, at the guiding motivation that inspired her in the multiple changing circumstances of life. By nature she was not given to being demonstrative, however, when it was a question of the rights of the school, the parents and the child she was quite insistent and determined. She was professional in her dealings with parents and authority. She was an educator and used every strategy for academic progress. She quietly and consistently made sacrifices of her time and energy to help children. In difficult situations she was both loyal and humble with authority and her sisters in community.

While small in stature, Sister Carmel's huge missionary heart enabled her to respond to the needs of the mission whenever and wherever she was needed. We thank God for the gift she was to us and to the countless number of hearts she touched in the Province of USA and Canada during her missionary years in the Province!