

*SISTER JOSEPH*

*OF OUR LADY*

*EDWARDS*



*BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:*

*APRIL 18, 1916*

*BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:*

*NOVEMBER 2, 2017*

**Sister Joseph Edwards**  
**Province of U.S.A. & Canada**  
**1916 - 2017**

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 Mercy Sister, she felt attracted to religious life in distant missions.

When she left school, Norah asked to enter the Mercy Sisters, but she was too young and they didn't have any foreign missions at that time so they didn't accept her. She 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 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 founder, 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 adventures."

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 my heart jumped for joy as then I knew I was being sent to India.”

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. Many were the hours she spent in the St. Clare chapel and in her room at prayer, her rosary always close at hand.

Over the years, Sister Joseph kept in touch with many of the boys who lived at St. Joseph’s House and remembered them always in her prayer intentions. When many of us gathered in 2016 on occasion of her 100th Birthday, some of her former boys traveled all the way to Newport, RI to join in the celebration.

Until her eyesight failed her, she continued to read the letters of Blessed Anne Marie in the new French edition, and took great interest not only in the past history of our congregation, but in our missions around the world. Her heart was full of gratitude for the gift of her missionary vocation and for those she was privileged to serve. She closed her eyes and peacefully entered into eternity on November 2, 2017.

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