

SISTER IMMACULATA

OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

MURPHY



BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:

MARCH 5, 1921

BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:

AUGUST 5, 2011

Sister Immaculata Murphy
Province of U.S.A. & Canada
1921 – 2011

In Dublin, Ireland, on 05 March 1921, Kathleen Modena was born to John Murphy and Mary Jane Moore. Being the only baby girl in the family who survived after birth, she was greatly cherished by her parents, her two brothers, and subsequently by her nieces and nephews and a large extended family, all deeply Christian.

From an early age Kathleen harboured the dream of becoming a religious. Later, sharing her vocation story with some of her Sisters, she confided that she carried a letter to Jesus on her heart, telling Him that she really wanted to be His if he would have her! She also bashfully admitted that singing love songs to Jesus became one of her favourite ways to pray.

She entered the novitiate in Ferbane in September 1940. She received the habit on 27 March 1941 with the name of Sister Immaculata of the Holy Spirit. After her first profession on 08 September 1942, she was sent to Mount Sackville. There were no motor cars in our convents in Ireland in those days, so the yardman, with his horse and cart, met her at the railway station. Her trunk was loaded on to the cart and Sister Immaculata got in also for the journey up the very steep hill that led to Mount Sackville. The night was dark and windy. Half-way up the hill, Sister's veil got caught in a bush. Nothing could be done; the horse had to keep going as the hill was too steep to stop. On arrival in Mount Sackville, the Sister portress immediately escorted the new arrival to meet the Reverend Mother whose first greeting was, "Sister where is your veil?" "It's on a bush on the hill," was the reply. The veil was recovered the next day.

In those days Mount Sackville was a Girls' Boarding School which also catered to a small number of little boys under the age of twelve. Sister

Immaculata was assigned to the boys' linen room. Many of those boys remember her with affection and later visited her when she returned to Mount Sackville.

In 1947 Sister was one of four Cluny Sisters missioned to start a new foundation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Their ministry was to assist the Spiritan community in the management of St. Joseph's Home for Homeless Boys. As a gifted seamstress, Sister Immaculata accepted the charge of the linen room. Initially this was a daunting challenge. Not only had she to adjust to a new culture, but also to the demands of forty to forty-five orphaned boys ranging in age from twelve to eighteen. This took every moment of her five or six working days. The Father Director insisted that the boys have clean clothes every day with a special outfit for Sunday. In her dealings with the boys Sister Immaculata treated each one with respect and dignity while at the same time not tolerating any misbehaviour. If they needed a reprimand she gave it but she loved them and they knew it and when they were in difficulty they invariably found their way to the linen room where they were comforted and perhaps treated to a few sweets or a chocolate.

In community Sister Immaculata was equally dedicated. She had a caring, concerned relationship with her sisters, willing to do anything that could be of help. She was very particular that the religious habit should be perfectly made and fitted. She had a strong commitment to her prayer life and often prayed an extra Rosary for some particular intention. This was particularly stressed in a tribute paid to her after her death. "She may have retired from active service but she never retired from prayer or service to and concern for others – especially those who were not well or had a sick relative. Not only did she pray for them but she continued to enquire assiduously about them".

When the sisters withdrew from Philadelphia in 1976, Sister Immaculata was assigned to St. Margaret's Home in Providence, Rhode Island, to minister to elderly ladies, and in 1979 to the Cathedral

Rectory, also in Providence. True to her great spirit, she brought the same untiring, selfless ministry to each of these assignments. Countless hours were spent laundering and fitting Bishops' robes. Only the best was good enough! A cause of great joy for her was when a retired Bishop and priest friend came from the U.S. to visit her in Ireland. She also made time to visit and bring communion to the sick and the aged.

In 2006 she returned to Mount Sackville and continued to render little services in the community. Perhaps her greatest service was her cheerfulness. One striking memory of Sister Immaculata was her gift of story telling. Many of these stories reflected on herself, on some thing that had actually happened to her and they were so humorously related.

Eventually her health began to decline and so she was transferred to our Nursing Home. She was greatly loved by the lay staff. She never complained, appreciated all their care and kept them amused by her quick wit and amusing comments. Her last weeks were painful and her breathing became very laboured. She was fully conscious when the last rites were administered. Each day she was surrounded by her loving family and the Sisters kept constant vigil by her bedside until, on 05 August 2011, in peace and serenity, she gave back her lovely soul to God and presumably continued her "love songs to Jesus".

As a further witness to the way she touched all those she served, on hearing of her death, two former Bishops of Providence immediately arranged to celebrate Mass for her in the Cathedra and a short time afterwards travelled to a Nursing Home in Newport where a former companion of Sister Immaculata now resides and again celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of her soul.

May she rest in peace!