



## *Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate*

On Wednesday morning, May 16, 2018, our Sister, Marlene Ambrose, brought to completion the Franciscan mission that God entrusted to her 74 years ago. As someone who danced through life, filled with the Holy Spirit, it is no wonder that she passed from here into eternity just as the great feast of Pentecost approached. Blessed with a flair for creativity, gentle humor, and embodied joy, she took on the countenance of the "little ones" who, by her own account, touched and transformed her. Gifted with seemingly boundless energy, enthusiasm, and wonder, Sister Marlene, as those who knew her well can attest, was ready and willing to join in the dance of life, whenever and wherever the Spirit said, "Dance!"

A native of Joliet, Illinois, Virginia Ambrose was born to her parents Ursula (Makse) and Valentine Ambrose on March 29, 1927. The third of six children, she was raised in St. Joseph's Parish, where her Catholic faith and Slovenian cultural heritage were embraced and celebrated. As her life unfolded from childhood to adolescence, these roots and wings gave her the foundation and imagination necessary to say "yes" to a vocational call. Inspired by the Joliet Franciscan Sisters who were her teachers and mentors at St. Joseph Grade School and St. Francis Academy, she was eager to follow in their footsteps and embrace the Gospel way of life.

In the midst of a world at war, Virginia entered the Postulancy of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate on September 7, 1943. The following year, on August 12, 1944, she was received into the Novitiate and given the name, "Sister Mary Marlene." Making her way through the rigors of initial formation, in June of 1946, she wrote to Reverend Mother Immaculate to request permission to make her first profession of vows. Reflecting upon the significance of the Congregation in her life, she wrote, "Most important of all, the Community has given me advantages to grow in holiness." Little did she know that after her profession, her opportunities for growing in holiness would soon multiply and increase. At the age of nineteen, and recently vested with her black veil and silver cross, Sr. Mary Marlene was missioned to St. Stephen School in Streator, Illinois, and entrusted with a classroom full of sixty-five energetic second graders.

Completing her Bachelor's degree at the College of St. Francis and pursuing additional studies at St. Xavier College and a variety of continuing education courses, Sr. Marlene set her education and her entire self at the service of the young children in whom she took great delight. Such was her influence, that later as adults, former students often circled

# Alleluia!



*Sister M. Marlene Ambrose, OSF*

back to give thanks to Sr. Marlene for the education, encouragement and affection that she provided. Over the course of more than fifty-five years, she opened pathways to learning and set countless children on their First Communion journeys of sharing in the life of Christ. Looking back on her many years of success as a teacher, Sr. Marlene recounted the story of her first day in the classroom when she completed her lesson plans for the day by 10:00 am – and wondered what she would do for the next four hours. With a little help from her more experienced companions, she found some measure of consolation in the wise saying: "*Sometimes the things your students need most, has nothing to do with what is on your lesson plan!*"

In the summer of 1992, Sr. Marlene entered into a new chapter of her life as she left the classroom and became assistant resident coordinator at the Motherhouse. In the years that followed, she offered herself generously to meet the needs of others and to share a good portion of Franciscan joy wherever she went. Her diverse ministries were truly inter-generational and always focused on person-centered care and concern. Dancing through life – she looked after infants and the elderly; she greeted visitors to the Chancery Office and companioned residents at Our Lady of the Angels; she shared good times with members of the Slovenian Women's Union who honored her with the 2004 Woman of the Year Award and the Senior Services Center of Joliet.

By her own account, Sr. Marlene was an artist, a photographer, and a lover of music. She was enchanted by the wonders of creation and captivated by Franciscan Spirituality. With the heart of a dancer, she followed the lead of the Lord of the Dance with joy and thanksgiving. As one who found happiness in making the world a better place – "one polka at a time," may our celebration of the life and legacy of our sister, Marlene, inspire each of us to join in a dance of gratitude and praise to the God in Whom we all live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Indeed, it is this God in Whom she now rejoices - for all eternity! Alleluia! Alleluia!

## *Sister M. Marlene Ambrose, OSF*

*March 29, 1927 — May 17, 2018*

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>Born:</i>                 | March 29, 1927                               |
| <i>Parents:</i>              | Valentine Ambrose and Ursula (Makse) Ambrose |
| <i>Postulancy:</i>           | September 7, 1943                            |
| <i>Novitiate:</i>            | August 12, 1944                              |
| <i>First Profession:</i>     | August 12, 1946                              |
| <i>Perpetual Final Vows:</i> | August 12, 1949                              |
| <i>Entered New Life:</i>     | May 17, 2018                                 |

### **Ministry History**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1946-1949 | Teacher: Grade 2, St. Stephen, Streator, Illinois        |
| 1949-1956 | Teacher: Grades 1, 2, St. Joseph, Joliet, Illinois       |
| 1956-1960 | Teacher: Grades 1, 2, St. Stephen, Streator              |
| 1960-1962 | Teacher: Grade 2, St. Joseph, Joliet                     |
| 1962-1964 | Teacher: Grades 1, 2, St. John, Joliet                   |
| 1964-1965 | Teacher: Grade 1, Divine Savior, Chicago, Illinois       |
| 1965-1969 | Teacher: Grades 1, 2, Holy Family, Cleveland, Ohio       |
| 1969-1982 | Teacher: Grade 1, St. Mary, Plainfield, Illinois         |
| 1982-1983 | Substitute Teacher/Tutor: St. Malachy, Rantoul, Illinois |
| 1983-1985 | Teacher/Enrichment/Tutor: St. Malachy, Rantoul           |
| 1985-1986 | Teacher: St. Malachy, Rantoul                            |
| 1986-1989 | Teacher: Holy Family, Joliet                             |
| 1989-1990 | Teacher/Secretary: Holy Family, Joliet                   |
| 1990-1991 | Teacher/Librarian: Holy Family, Joliet                   |
| 1991-1992 | Teacher: Kindergarten, Holy Family, Joliet               |
| 1992-1995 | Assistant Resident Coordinator: Motherhouse, Joliet      |
| 1995-1996 | In discernment: Motherhouse, Joliet                      |
| 1996-1998 | Child Care: Cherwin Home, Joliet                         |
| 1998-1999 | Care of the Elderly                                      |
| 1999-2005 | Cherwin Home   |
| 2005-2007 | Child/Senior Care Ministry                               |
| 2007-2014 | Receptionist: Chancery Office, Joliet                    |
| 2014-2017 | Community Service: OLA                                   |
| 2017-2018 | Contemplative presence with OLA residents and families   |

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| <i>Wake:</i>                     | Tuesday, May 20, 2018, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet   |
| <i>Prayer Service:</i>           | Tuesday, May 20, 2018, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet  |
| <i>Mass of Christian Burial:</i> | Tuesday, May 20, 2018, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet  |
| <i>Interment:</i>                | Wednesday, May 21, Section 8, Lot 344, Grave 6, Resurrection Cemetery   |
| <i>Predeceased by:</i>           | By her parents, Valentine Ambrose and Ursula (Makse) Ambrose, her brothers, Stanley, Leonard and Valentine Ambrose; her sister, Mary Ann Morgan |
| <i>Survived by:</i>              | Her sister, Therese Bergstrom, and nieces and nephews   |

*Rest in Peace, Sister Marlene!*