



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

In the fall of 1911, Adam and Mary (Ohman) Tikva welcomed into the world of Cleveland, Ohio, the first of their eight children, a precious baby girl whom they named Mary. The pride and joy of her parents and a devoted older sister to her siblings, Mary was a constant companion to her mother who was often in poor health, and an eager assistant to her industrious father whose home brewery and beer garden provided her with a lifetime of tales to tell. As a young girl, she applied herself as a diligent student at Holy Family school, ever-grateful for the education she received from the Sisters of Notre Dame. As an adolescent and a young adult, she contributed to the well-being of her family by working tirelessly for seven years in a nearby clothing factory both days and nights. Treasuring her Croatian immigrant roots and eager to know more of her family background, she accompanied her mother on a memorable three-month trip to Yugoslavia at her father's initiative. In the course of her journey, she entered into the lives of loved ones whom she would never forget, embracing traditional customs and cherishing special foods and clothing, yet becoming painfully aware of the realities that had led her parents to immigrate to the United States in their youth. Declining a proposal for marriage, she came to a deeper awareness of her American identity and the unfolding future that awaited her upon her return.

Ever confident in the power of the Holy Spirit at work in her life, Mary remained attentive to the grace she received one day, a grace that built upon her mother's loving example, the witness of her eighth-grade teacher, Sr. Waltrude, her own personal prayer and devotion to St. Therese of Lisieux, and a chance encounter with two Joliet Franciscans on the front steps of Holy Family church. Unusual as it may seem in today's world, Mary's vocation to religious life was confirmed instantaneously after a brief interaction with Sr. Virginia and Sr. Valentine, whose words of invitation and encouragement set in motion a life-altering decision to become a Sister of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

On September 8, 1934, Mary came to Joliet as a postulant and on August 12 of the following year she entered the Novitiate and received the name Sr. Mary Wilhelmine. Two years later, on August 12, 1937, she made her first profession of vows and embarked on a life of ministry and loving service that would continue for 76 more years. Affectionately known as "Willie" by her companion seamstress, Sr. Thaddeus, whom she fondly referred to as "Teddy," Sr. Mary Wilhelmine devoted herself to the art and craft of habit-making. She once wrote: "Making habits for our sisters was most rewarding, to see them at their Receptions, Professions and Jubilees, and to know I had a part in clothing each Sister." Ironically, the service that brought her such great delight became the very ministry that instructed her in the mystery

# Alleluia!



*Sister Mary Wilhelmine Tikva, OSF*

of letting go. Reflecting on her life, she observed: "After 46 years, it was difficult to let go of my first ministry of making habits for my Sisters. But I discovered through this 'letting go' what is yet unfinished; I'm still in the process of getting my soul and life in order."

Known for her smiling face, the lilt in her laughter, her slightly tilted veil and her playful sashay in corridors and hallways, Sr. Mary was an exemplar of a joyful countenance within and beyond the borders of community life. With a twinkle in her eye, she would simultaneously chuckle and sigh to herself as she quietly observed the shadow side of the humanity of others. By example, she urged everyone on to greater virtue. With wisdom and compassion, she perceived the vulnerability and limitations of us all. She knew that some difficulties in life were inevitable, but with the practice of a minimum of mindfulness and charity, many were preventable. With a common sense engagement of the world, she enchanted others, drawing everyone she encountered into an experience of wonder, curiosity and attentiveness to the abiding presence of God. A woman of constant prayer and devotion to the Eucharist, Sr. Mary made a sacrament of daily life. Receiving the Body of Christ, distributing the Body of Christ and embracing the Body of Christ made manifest in those around her were the keys to her longevity and her gracefulness for over 101 years.

In a letter written to Sisters she believed to be in need of support and encouragement, Sr. Mary wrote the following words, words which, if we listen closely, we can hear her speaking to each of us today and every day: "Be assured of my thanks and prayers, my continual prayers. May God give you strength with dreaming. May God give you hope, peace and perseverance to accomplish his holy plan. God love you!"

May God love you, too, Sr. Mary. And may you know forevermore, that with habits or without habits, you have helped to make of us all something beautiful for God. Thank you for being our Sister and an artisan of God's love in our midst. Alleluia. Alleluia.

## *Sister Mary Wilhelmine Tikva, OSF*

*October 19, 1911 — January 28, 2013*

<i>Born:</i>	October 19, 1911
<i>Parents:</i>	Adam Tikva and Mary F. (Ohman) Tikva
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 8, 1934
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 12, 1935
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1937
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 12, 1940
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	January 28, 2013

### **Ministry History**

1937-1942	Assistant Seamstress: Community Sewing Room, St. Francis Convent, Joliet, Illinois
1942-1943	Domestic Work: St. Peter, Mansfield, Ohio
1944-1945	Domestic Work: SS. Cyril and Methodius, Chicago, Illinois
1946-1962	Assistant Seamstress: Community Sewing Room, St. Francis Convent, Joliet
1962-1968	Community Sewing Room: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Center, Joliet
1968-1970	Community Sewing Room: Motherhouse, Joliet
1970-1971	St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Louisville, Ohio
1971-1972	General Assistant: Motherhouse, Joliet
1972-1973	Portress: Motherhouse, Joliet
1973-1991	Receptionist: Motherhouse, Joliet
1991-1996	Receptionist/Pass the mail: Motherhouse, Joliet
1996-2003	Community Service/Receptionist: Motherhouse, Joliet
2003-2013	Community Service: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Center

<i>Wake:</i>	Thursday, January 31, 2013, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Prayer Service:</i>	Thursday, January 31, 2013, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Mass of Christian Burial:</i>	Thursday, January 31, 2013, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Burial:</i>	Friday, February 1, 2013, leaving Our Lady of Angels at 9:00 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	Her parents, Adam Tikva and Mary F. (Ohman) Tikva; her brothers, Michael, Steve, George, Stanley and Peter, and her sisters, Katherine and Dorothy.
<i>Survived by:</i>	Many nieces and nephews

*Rest in Peace, Sister Mary*

# reflection

*Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate*

Joliet, IL

**Sr. Mary Wilhelmine Tikva, OSF**

By Sr. Rose Marie Surwilo, OSF — January 31, 2013

“Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words when necessary.” These words attributed to St. Francis of Assisi were so beautifully fulfilled in the life of our dear Sister Mary Wilhelmine Tikva. Tonight Mary speaks to us. She speaks to us in the Scripture readings she chose for this celebration, the readings we just heard. In fact, Mary is giving us this reflection. What has Mary taught us by her life? What is Mary teaching us through these readings tonight?

First, time is God’s precious gift to us and we must live mindfully, savoring each moment.

Second, since we are God’s beloved children, we must look forward with great hope in God’s promises.

And third, our hearts need not be troubled if we have faith in God and follow Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

In the reading from Ecclesiastes, a reading we have all heard many times, we hear Mary telling us not to miss the many things that touch each of our lives. “Live mindfully,” she says. “There is an appointed time for everything!” She continues: “My life was filled with giving birth and dying, with weeping, but more with laughing, some mourning but lots of dancing! I remember,” she says, “when I had to rip a seam in a habit that wasn’t quite right for one of our Sisters. I loved the sewing I did for so many years with my friend, Sister Thaddeus. But there came the time when I had to lose, lose my ministry of sewing because times were changing. So I found another way to use the precious time the Lord gave me and I found the ministry of portress at the Motherhouse. Do you remember that?”

Mary, we do remember and recognize that you teach us, in the words of the author of Ecclesiastes, that “there is nothing better than to rejoice and to do well during life.”

Mary, what do you want to teach us through the Responsorial Psalm and the reading from the First Letter of John?

“I heard and experienced the Lord telling me and showing me over and over that I was his beloved daughter. He loved me and still does, with an everlasting love. Living mindfully each precious moment, I knew that God our Father was taking care of me as His child and preparing me for something much more wonderful than anything I could imagine. I felt safe, like a child in a parent’s arms. I love you all, those of you who are here tonight and everyone who has ever been part of my life. I want you to know, as I know, that you are God’s beloved child so you, too, may live with that same hope in God’s promises.”

Mary, you never seemed perturbed and you always seemed to be smiling. You really lived what Jesus said in John’s Gospel: “Do not let your heart be troubled.” How did you do that?

“Because I believed in God the Father and His son Jesus. I didn’t talk about faith much, but I know that I had the gift of faith. It gave me eyes to see when life was dark and it gave me light to move beyond the hurts. It gave me ears to hear beyond the unkind words or anger of another, to a heart that was hurting. And I could smile my love to them. I believed that Jesus was my way, my truth and my life.”

Your happy, childlike spirit, Mary — would you give us a simple explanation of how you could live this way day after day? (Many of us may have already heard her answer.)

“Everyday Jesus gives us his Body and Blood. Why wouldn’t I be happy?”

By the world’s standards, Mary hadn’t made any headlines in any newspapers. But for so many of us the example of her life has left an indelible message on our hearts. To have met Mary was to have met a child of God.

**Reflection written by:  
Sr. Rose Marie Surwilo, OSF  
Mass of Christian Burial  
January 31, 2013**