



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

On Saturday, February 9, 2013, our sister, Marian Voelker peacefully made her journey home to God. Sharing with her beloved Mother Alfred a lifelong devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, after whom she was named and whose feast day was close at hand, Marian rested confidently in the knowledge that at the hour of her death she would not be alone. Graciously living out her faith-filled "*Fiat*," she quietly reached the end of her days and entrusted to the God of History the final chapter in the story of her life.

Born on October 18, 1935, Marian Bernadette Voelker was the sixth of ten children to be lovingly welcomed into the world by Robert and Marian (Schilling) Voelker. As a young child, Marian and her family lived in close proximity to her Voelker grand-parents from whom she acquired an inter-generational appreciation for "living histories." Growing up in East St. Louis, Illinois, Marian's inquisitive mind and historical imagination were stirred at an early age as she began to make meaning of the joys and sorrows of life as seen from the banks of the Mississippi River, the railway crossroads of the Midwest and a city that was an urban crucible of rapid social and economic change. Nurtured in the faith at St. Elizabeth's Parish and educated by the Adorers of the Blood of Christ at St. Teresa's Academy, she was drawn to religious life, yet uncertain as to where her envisioned vocational path would lead.

In the fall of 1953, Marian made her way to Joliet, Illinois, to begin her freshman year at the College of St. Francis. There, she encountered the Joliet Franciscan sisters who, as teachers, mentors, classmates and friends, inspired in her the confidence necessary to follow the desire of her heart - to set herself at the service of God and the service of others. Resonating with the words of St. Francis of Assisi, though perhaps a bit more private and reserved in her manner of expression, Marian took less than a year to proclaim: "*This is what I want, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart.*"

In September of 1954, the Marian Year, her future as a Sister of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate began to unfold as she and her "bumper crop" of 41 classmates entered the postulancy. A year later, she was received into the novitiate and given the name, Sr. Louis Marie. Professing her first vows in August of 1957 and her final vows in August of 1960, she devoted herself for fifteen years to the ministries of teaching and administration in parish schools located in Ohio and Illinois. Building upon her under-graduate studies, Marian went on to earn a Master's degree from the Seraphic Institute of the College of St. Francis. In 1972, after several summers of integrated study, she also completed a Master's degree in Library Sciences at Rosary College. While endeavoring to bring her "value-added" expertise and love of libraries to the schools where she served as teacher and principal, Marian became increasingly more mindful of her particular suitability and giftedness as an innovative reference librarian. In the light of new ministerial opportunities and emerging needs, she courageously reassessed her life, her sense of mission, her talents

Alleluia!



Sister Marian Voelker, OSF

and her abilities. With the encouragement of those who knew her well, she single-heartedly redirected her energies and efforts to library services in a variety of settings including the College of St. Francis, the Joliet Public Library, the Motherhouse and the Will County Jail.

In 1975, a turning point in the history of congregations of women religious in the United States, Sr. Francine Zeller, then president of the Congregation and of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, invited Marian to become the Congregation's archivist, a position that would enable her not only "to preserve the Congregation's past and make it accessible for the future," but also to offer leadership and advice to other congregations in need of assistance in all things archival. Marian not only took up the timely challenges of the 1970s, but for the next 37 years proved to be an enthusiastic, dedicated and incredibly organized archivist. In the process, she also became a chronicler *par excellence* of the life and times of Mother Alfred Moes and a resourceful researcher for those Franciscan congregations, institutions and heritage ministries which trace their origins to the legacy of Mother Alfred. As for her Joliet Franciscan Sisters and Associates, past, present and to come, Marian left no stone unturned in the quest to discover, uncover and recover our 148-year history, no grave unmarked, no document or photograph catalogued, no "inquiry for information" unaddressed, no accomplishment or honor unrecorded, no "journey home to God" uncommemorated, no "Jubilarian" uncelebrated, and no "new member or Associate" uninitiated into the mysteries and histories of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

In death, as in life, our sister Marian entrusted to our care the history that is ours to reverence, to embrace, to interpret and to share, a history that is not only held in archives, but also, and more importantly, a history that is held in each of our hearts (Lk 2:51). Now the weight of this history is ours to shoulder, with all of its paradox and promise, so that in her words, we might have "*a clearer understanding of life, a deeper faith, a better appreciation of the value of the little things in life that we ordinarily take for granted, and a new view of what it means to love and to offer one's life for those whom one loves.*" (Sr. Marian Voelker, 1991)

With grateful and joyful hearts, let us give thanks to God for sharing with us the life story of our treasured Sister, loving friend and unforgettable archivist, "Marian, the librarian." Alleluia, Alleluia.

Sister Marian Voelker, OSF

October 18, 1935 — February 9, 2013

<i>Born:</i>	October 18, 1935
<i>Parents:</i>	Robert V. Voelker and Marian E. (Schilling) Voelker
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 6, 1954
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 13, 1955
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1957
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 13, 1960
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	February 9, 2013

Ministry History

1957-1958	Teacher: Grades 2 and 3, St. Edward, Ashland, Ohio
1958-1961	Teacher: Grades 4 and 6, Immaculate Conception, Columbus, Ohio
1961-1962	Teacher: Grade 5, St. Mary Magdalene, Columbus
1962-1963	Teacher: Grade 6, St. Ludmilla, Chicago, Illinois
1963-1965	Teacher: Grade 7, St. Joseph, Elgin, Illinois
1965-1967	Teacher: Grade 8, Sacred Heart, Hubbard Woods, Illinois
1967-1969	Teacher: Grade 8, St. Francis Xavier, Chicago
1969-1970	Principal and Teacher: Grade 8, St. Francis Xavier, Chicago
1970-1972	Principal and Teacher: Junior High, St. Francis Xavier, Chicago
1972	Student: Rosary College, MA studies
1972-1973	Assistant Librarian: College of St. Francis
1973	Librarian and Teacher: Grades 7 and 8, Father Marquette Consolidation, Muskegon, Michigan
1973-1974	Librarian: Joliet Public Library, Joliet, Illinois
1974-1975	Reference Librarian: Joliet Public Library, Joliet
1975-1977	Archivist: Motherhouse, Joliet
1977-1981	Archivist/Librarian: Motherhouse, Joliet
1981-1982	Archivist/Librarian: Motherhouse, Joliet and Participant: Center for Professional Growth, Westmont, Illinois
1982-1984	Archivist: Motherhouse, Joliet
1984-1985	Archivist/Librarian: Motherhouse, Joliet
1985-1990	Archivist/Librarian: Will County Jail and Motherhouse, Joliet
1990-2005	Archivist/Librarian: Motherhouse, Joliet
2005-2006	Archivist/Librarian: Motherhouse, Joliet and USF Archives Consultant: USF, Joliet
2006-2013	Archivist: Congregation, Joliet

<i>Wake:</i>	Friday, February 15, 2013, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Prayer Service:</i>	Friday, February 15, 2013, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Mass of Christian Burial:</i>	Friday, February 15, 2013, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Burial:</i>	Saturday, February 16, 2013, leaving Our Lady of Angels at 9:00 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Interment:</i>	Section 8, Lot 360, Grave 1, Resurrection Cemetery
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	By her parents, Robert Voelker and Marian (Schilling) Voelker, brothers Robert (Evelynne) Voelker, John Voelker, William Voelker, Thomas Voelker, Guy Voelker and unnamed baby brother
<i>Survived by:</i>	Sisters Teresa (Michael) Anagnostopoulos, brothers Louis (Anna) Voelker and James (Caryl) Voelker, sister-in-law Ruth Voelker, many nieces and nephews

Rest in Peace, Sister Marian

reflection

Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate
Joliet, IL

Sr. Marian Voelker, OSF

By Sr. Elaine Kerscher OSF — February 15, 2013

In June of 1976, Marian was finishing her first year as our Congregation archivist and I was beginning my first year as General Secretary. Our offices were along the same hallway in the Motherhouse and I had a well-worn path to her door. Whenever I approached Marian with a question related to our Community, she always had the answer and was so helpful – not only for the eight years we worked together, but all the years after. On Wednesday of this week, I went to the office of our Congregation Archives, and I sat in Marian’s chair at her desk and attempted to formulate this reflection. I closed my eyes and I told Marian that I had two more questions for her: (1) Why did you choose these Scripture readings? and (2) What message do you want us to take to heart?

Sure enough, when I opened my eyes there was an answer in front of me – and chills went through my body! Marian came through again! A laminated card off to the side of her desk caught my attention. On it was a section from our *Constitutions*, which reads:

Our formation as women,
as Christians,
and as Franciscans
is a lifelong process.
It is the work of the Lord within us.
It touches the depths of our lives
and gradually transforms us,
through the action of the Spirit,
into the image of Jesus.
(Art. #65)

I sense that Marian is telling us that each one of us – just like Jeremiah and Paul and Jairus – each of us is called by the Lord to be transformed into the image

of Jesus, and she reminds us that this is a lifelong process. Tonight, through these readings, I believe that Marian is sharing with us her lifelong journey of transformation.

It began at her Baptism when Marian Bernadette Voelker received the gift of faith and was grounded in a deep and loving relationship with her God. Throughout her life she felt confidence in the Lord’s words to Jeremiah: “I know well the plans I have in mind for you...plans for your welfare...plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, I will listen to you...when you look for me, you will find me.” How these words must have echoed in Marian’s heart as she discerned what the Lord had in mind for her. After she graduated from St. Teresa Academy in East St. Louis, Illinois, she traveled north to attend the College of St. Francis in Joliet, and there she met the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. Sister Mary Vincent and Sister Tharla were special mentors to her and guided her through her discernment of the call to religious life as a Joliet Franciscan. She entered the Congregation as a postulant in September, 1954, the first step towards her first profession of vows in 1957 and then final vows in 1960.

Marian’s active ministry to God’s people spanned fifty-six years. She loved her years in elementary education, delighting especially in the smiles of children as they learned about God in religion classes. Her service as archivist for our Congregation for nearly thirty-eight years is a testament not only to her remarkable skills of organization, but also to her love of the Congregation – her love for her Franciscan Sisters

and Associates. As archivist, Marian preserved our history, told the stories, cared lovingly for our artifacts, and brought the history of the Joliet Franciscans to life. In 1997 Marian reflected on this sacred ministry. She wrote:

Each sister has a story; each one's story I have come to know and love through my days in this holy place. No matter when the sister lived, died or moved away from us, I feel that we know each other. Archives are alive for me! This is certainly not a paper job, nor is it a dreary job. Each day brings its own excitement, each day a renewal, each day the hope of our challenging future as Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

When Marian first became ill in the middle days of Advent, little did any of us know that she was on the threshold of an eternal and glorious epiphany. I find the Gospel story of Jesus restoring life to Jairus' dying daughter to be deeply symbolic of Marian's final hours. Throughout her life Marian knew that the Lord had plans for her – a future full of hope – and on the evening of February 9th her hope would reach fulfillment. The Lord Jesus called Marian home, gently and lovingly – “Come, my beloved” – and grasping her hand He led her to the pinnacle of her journey of transformation. He led her to her destiny, the “New Jerusalem.” As Paul tells us in the second reading: The one who raised up the Lord Jesus will raise us up along with Jesus and place us in God's presence – and that is what Marian has longed for with all her heart. Marian, we have been blessed to share this journey with you – thank you!

**Reflection written by:
Sr. Elaine Kerscher, OSF
Mass of Christian Burial
February 15, 2013**