

February 23, 1998

“My heart rejoices in your saving power.
I will sing to the Lord for His goodness to me.”
(Entrance Psalm - 7th Sunday of Ordinary Time)

Dear Sisters,

Shortly after sunrise on a glorious Sunday morning, our dear Sister Theresia was called to rejoice forever in the goodness of the Lord.



Sister M. Theresia - Josephine Bartke
Born: December 16, 1901 in Pye, Germany
First Profession: November 30, 1922
Died: February 22, 1998 in Reading, PA

Sister Theresia entered our congregation as an aspirant in 1917. In November of 1921, while still a postulant, she was missioned to the United States. Less than four weeks after her arrival, Sister began her canonical novitiate in Reading.

In the fall of 1923, Sister Theresia began her teaching ministry with great zeal and dedication. Several of her former students who themselves have celebrated 60 years in religious life remember her fondly as a resourceful teacher. In the course of 54 years, Sister taught in parish schools in Nazareth, Hilltown, Palmerton, Coplay, and Philadelphia. At the age of 76, Sister Theresia substituted the full-time responsibility of classroom teaching for that of tutoring. She continued in this ministry for another nine years.

The sisters with whom she lived and those for whom she served as local superior knew her as a kind and gentle person. Throughout her life, Sister Theresia had a special devotion to Mary.

Sister Theresia was a talented calligrapher. She generously shared this gift with other sisters and in the course of her long career prepared thousands of First Holy Communion, Confirmation, and graduation certificates for the many students whose lives she touched.

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In 1988, Sister Theresia left St. Henry's in Philadelphia where she had ministered for 32 years. She joined the retirement community at Villa St. Elizabeth. Two years later when plans were made to close the Villa, Sister moved to Holy Family Center. Well into her nineties, Sister Theresia continued her ministry of prayer and her work with calligraphy. She also loved to do knitting for the poor.

Her last few years were spent in silence and withdrawal. As the spark of life slipped from her frail body, her sisters kept vigil. Accompanied by their prayer, Sister Theresia was taken home by the Lord whom she served so faithfully for so many years.

On Ash Wednesday, February 25, 1998, at 3:30 p.m., the Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated for our dear departed sister. The presider of this liturgy will be one of Sister Theresia's grateful pupils, Most Rev. Martin Lohmuller, retired auxiliary bishop of Philadelphia. Afterwards, she will be laid to rest in our convent cemetery.

Yours in the Heart of Jesus,

Sister Marie Clark, n.s.c.