

Province Center
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January 27, 1995

"Look up to the Lord that you may be radiant with joy."
(Psalm 34 - Communion antiphon, this week's liturgy)

Dear Sisters,

The above antiphon sums up the beautiful life of Sister Juventia, a joyful person who loved life.



Sister M. Juventia - Catherine Bender
Born: January 6, 1900 in Allentown, PA
First Profession: November 24, 1919
Died: January 27, 1995 in Reading, PA

Sister Juventia came to us from a happy Christian family and carried that happiness with her wherever she went. She was a thorough and gentle teacher, a kind and understanding superior, a dynamic and creative school principal. She served in these capacities in parish schools in Nazareth, Lansford, Philadelphia (St. Henry), Northampton, Haycock, Bethlehem, Hilltown, and Athens, Georgia. From 1946 through 1962, she taught at Little Flower High School in Philadelphia. She was much loved by her students and their families.

In 1969, literally on the eve of her Golden Jubilee celebration, Sister Juventia suffered a severe stroke. From that time on, Sister was physically handicapped by paralysis and a speech difficulty; however, her mind remained clear. Sister Juventia's joy and love of life were tested and purified in the crucible of more than 25 years of physical diminishment and suffering.

When informed early last year that the poor circulation in her right leg was life-threatening, Sister gave her informed consent for its removal (complications resulted in a two-stage amputation).

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Sister Juventia celebrated her long-looked-forward-to 75th Jubilee in May. Surrounded by family and friends, she seemed to enjoy every minute of the celebration. In September, it became apparent that the condition of poor circulation had spread to her left leg. Though visibly shaken by this realization, she consented to have her second leg amputated. When I visited her in the hospital, I reminded her that the Motherhouse celebration of the Jubilee would take place the following week (shortly after her discharge) and she smiled broadly at the prospect.

Another event to which Sister Juventia looked forward with eager anticipation was her 95th birthday. She celebrated this occasion exactly three weeks ago today, surrounded by the sisters and her relatives. Sister did not indulge in self-pity. When someone asked how she was, she replied, "Ever since I got rid of that old leg that hurt so much, I'm fine!"

Like a number of other sisters in the infirmary, Sister recently had a "cold", resulting in respiratory congestion and fever. She responded well to the antibiotics, though, and seemed to be improving. She even ate a little breakfast this morning. After the nurses "turned and propped" her, she fell asleep, a sleep from which she awakened in heaven.

We are grateful to Sister Juventia for her example of union with God, her service, kindness, and patience in suffering. May she allow her mantle of joy and love of life to fall upon us all!

The Mass of Resurrection will be celebrated for her at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, January 30, 1995, after which she will be laid to rest in our convent cemetery.

United in the Heart of Jesus,

Sister Rita M. Ehemain, M.S.C.