

Sister Perpetua Michelin, CSA

Sister Perpetua (Marie) Michelin, 93, died on Thursday, May 21, 2009, at St. Francis Home, where she resided.

Marie was born April 16, 1916, in Munising, Michigan, to John and Hilda Johnson Michelin. After her mother's untimely death, Marie and her siblings were placed in the Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette, Michigan. Impressed with the care of the Sisters of St. Agnes who staffed the orphanage, Marie entered the Congregation in 1931. Four years later on August 15, she professed her first vows as Sister Perpetua.



With a bachelor's degree in Education from Marian College, Sister Perpetua spent her first few years teaching middle grades in Wisconsin and Illinois. Later she earned an MFA degree from Catholic University in Washington, DC, adding art and sewing to the courses she taught in grade schools, high schools, and even college in Wisconsin, Kansas, and Illinois. After more than forty years of teaching, Sister Perpetua turned to a new venture.

When another Sister of St. Agnes, Sr. Benedict, needed a companion to continue her work in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, Sr. Perpetua agreed to join her and the ever faithful dog Peanuts in a trailer. While Sister Benedict brought her nursing skills to the people of Mound Bayou and Shelby, MS, Sister Perpetua first brought her love of art and color to the school children of Mound Bayou and later served in parish ministry in Shelby. The two became inseparable friends, loved by the people in Mississippi, whom they continued to serve as long as their health permitted. When they left, Sister Benedict after 20 years and Sister Perpetua after 13, the pastor remarked: "Sister Benedict and Sister Perpetua have touched the lives and souls of many people in Bolivar County." At the core of their lives was faithfulness to prayer. They braved stormy weather and flooded streets when necessary to attend daily Mass.

Returning to the Motherhouse in Fond du Lac, the two Sisters found new ways to reach out to those in need. Their friendship kept them "connected at the level of the Sacred." Even the death of Sister Benedict in 2006 did not diminish the bond that had been formed. Sister Perpetua always remembered her friend and shared their stories readily, but her capacity for friendship went beyond her relationship with Sister Benedict. Members of her family, other Sisters, her caregivers, and others were drawn to her by her positive outlook on life which brought joy to all around her. It was Sister Perpetua's personal mission to find the grace or bright side to any situation, even when she was in ill health. She did not allow struggles or difficulties to disturb the joy that was core to her spirituality. She loved to play cards and other games, and she made sure there was time for recreation each evening. It was only within the past few weeks that she was no longer able to participate in this social pastime.

An artist through and through, Sr. Perpetua used her ability to design and draw to add beauty to any number of occasions, letters, and displays over the years. One of Sister Perpetua's favorite quotations sums up and ties together her life as an artist and as a woman religious: "As imperceptibly as the rainbow builds color by color, so do the years of our lives build to the Glory of God." She lived her life as she created her art: joyfully, colorfully, beautifully for the love of God and the uplifting of others.

Sister Perpetua is survived by four step-sisters all of Marquette, MI: Bernice Michelin, Arlene Herlick, Kay Nason, and Carol (Robert) Tallio; one step-brother: Bill (Dolores) Musolf also of Marquette, MI; three nephews: John (Rita) Michelin, William (Rosemary) Michelin, and James (Sandy) Michelin; and one niece: Sandy (Ed) Curry; and the Sisters of St. Agnes with whom she lived, prayed, and ministered.

Preceding her in death are her parents, John and Hilda Michelin; one sister, Ruth Hughes; one brother, Joseph; two step-brothers: John and Ray Musolf; one infant brother and two infant sisters.

Visitation: Visitation for Sister Perpetua will be held on Tuesday, May 26 from 9:00 a.m. until 1:45 p.m. at Nazareth Court and Center, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac. A prayer service will be held at 11:00 a.m.

Services: A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on May 26, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. in the St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac. Father Walter Orzechowski will preside. Burial will follow at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery.

The Sisters of St. Agnes are grateful to the nurses and staff of Nazareth Court and Center and of St. Francis Home for their care of Sister Perpetua.