



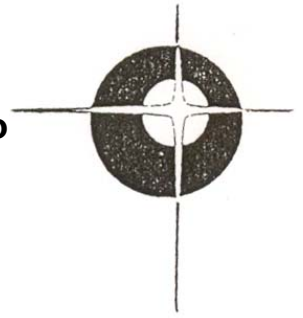
**“Merciful and gracious is the Lord.”
--Psalm 103:8**

SISTER LORETTA (MARY GREGORY) SIMON, SSND

September 27, 1921

July 21, 1946

April 30, 2009



At 9:45 p.m., on Thursday, April 30, our beloved Sister Loretta Simon, 87, died peacefully at Good Counsel Provincial House, Mankato, Minnesota. Several sisters were with her at the time of her death. It was noted in her funeral plans that the poem, *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson, held special meaning for her. And now, at last, she has heard a line from that poem, “Rise, clasp My hand and come!”

The funeral Mass for Sister Loretta, with Father Peter Nosbush as presider, will be on May 5 at 10:30 a.m., followed by cremation, with burial at a later date. The vigil service is at 7:00 p.m. on May 4. Loving sympathy to her sister-in-law Christine Simon, nieces and nephews and their families, as well as her former students and colleagues, and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The last surviving member of her immediate family, she was preceded in death by her parents, Otto and Anna (Seidl) Simon, brothers Otto, Karl, James and Joseph, and sisters Ann Martineau and Helen Simon.

Sister Loretta, the youngest of seven children, was born September 27, 1921, in the family home in West St. Paul, and baptized on October 21 at St. Matthew’s Church. She wrote that the family was happy about her birth – with one exception. Her six-year-old brother Joe “welcomed me with teary eyes because he didn’t want a baby sister.” As a result of much pleading by an older brother, she was named Loretta. Both her parents were German immigrants; her father worked as a brewer, and her mother as a homemaker.

Recently, a cousin wrote about Sister Loretta, “She had wonderful strong loving role models growing up. Her Seidl grandparents in particular were deep devout Catholics with a strict sense of prayer and faith community. Her father was a convert to the faith. She used all the gifts she grew up with to further her education for the love of God...”

Loretta enrolled in St. Matthew School as a first grader at the age of six. She received her First Communion in May 1932 and was confirmed by Archbishop John Gregory Murray in September 1933. She completed eight grades at St. Matthew, and then continued in high school there for two more years. She attended St. Joseph Academy for her junior and senior years, graduating in 1940.

She wrote that as a freshman, she chose nursing for her vocation, a choice that later in her life became a reality. She also traced her vocation to her freshman year when her class attended the pageant *On Silver Wings* at Good Counsel Academy. “Until April 27, 1937, the thought of dedicating my life to the service of God had never entered my mind. I shall never forget the moment of grace when God made known to me that He wanted me! It was while we were waiting for the curtains to part for the showing of the Pageant, *On Silver Wings*, when my eyes wandered to the balcony and to the happy faces of black and white figures seated there. Those serene faces held a message for me and I answered with my heart.”

Following graduation, she asked permission of her parents to enter the Candidature, but they refused their consent. She worked three years as a stock record clerk, keeping alive her desire to enter religious life. That desire was fulfilled when she entered the Candidature on August 29, 1943. At her reception into the Novitiate two years later, she was given the name Sister Mary Gregory; she later returned to her baptismal name.

After Profession, she taught at Sacred Heart, St. Paul. During this time, her older sister, a mother of nine, became critically ill and died. Sister Loretta struggled with the idea of leaving the convent to help the family. She listened to the advice of Mother Annunciata, and remained a School Sister of Notre Dame.

Over the next thirty years Sister Loretta taught intermediate and upper grades at several schools in Minnesota and Iowa, including St. Agnes, Sacred Heart and St. Andrew in St. Paul, Gilbertville, St. John and SS. Peter & Paul in Mankato, Morgan, Wabasha, Blue Earth, Wabasso, Canby and Wells. During these years she earned a B.A. from Mount Mary and an M.A. from St. Thomas College.

In 1974, she became a student in the nursing program at St. Mary's Junior College, Minneapolis, and graduated in 1976 with an RN associate degree. The nursing choice she made as a high school freshman now became a reality as she worked at St. Mary's in Rochester, Regina in Hastings, and St. John's in St. Paul. She also worked for Health Services and the Ramsey County Medical Center in St. Paul. At Ramsey, she worked in the psychiatric department and developed a great compassion and love for the mentally ill.

In the early 1990's, she spent some years in community service at Good Counsel in the sewing room, where she was known as an excellent seamstress. Her final nursing position was with TLC Home Care of Twin Cities.

In 1996, she retired, moving to Good Counsel again. She didn't really retire, as she shared her sewing talent for the next four years, and also was a Provincial House driver. She also produced beautiful counted cross stitch work. In 2000, her retirement took a different path, and she moved to the Wilder Foundation Complex in St. Paul, where she helped family members who were in nursing homes, and delighted in taking care of a great-grandnephew. Her "fulltime" life of prayer, presence and retirement began in 2003 when she moved back to Good Counsel.

Her cousin's words in a July 2008 letter very aptly sum up Sister Loretta's life, "It was so good to see her smiling face again and feel the peace and warmth of her personality. Even in her illness those special qualities cannot be masked. She never had a doubt of her calling to serve our Lord and Savior. She demonstrated that [calling] her whole life through the word of God, her teaching, her nursing skills and her humanitarian gifts to others and to those in our family circle."

May Sister Loretta, who believed so strongly in the mercy and graciousness of our God, now experience the closing words from *The Hound of Heaven*, "I am He Whom thou seekest!"

Sister Mary Kay Ash