

Sister Michelle Lefevre

1922 – 1986

Sister Michelle, known as Mary Louise, entered St. Mary Convent on July 2 after her graduation from Blessed Sacrament High School in 1940. The family she left consisted of her parents, Alfred and Mary Ann (Gannon) Lefevre, and two brothers, John and Paul. She was a highly intelligent novice with a unique sense of humor. She was famous for repeating a joke she had just heard with just enough of a twist punch line to make it twice as funny.

When she completed her novitiate, she attended Marygrove College where she obtained her B.A. in 1946 with a major in History. For twenty-two years there-after she taught Social Studies and/or Science in large high schools such as St. Mary, Akron, Immaculata, Immaculate heart of Mary, Westchester, and Bishop Gallagher in Harper Woods. However, by nature, Sister Michelle was a very private person who found it repugnant to mix with large groups. Although she was considered a successful teacher, she found the experience difficult. For this reason, she obtained permission to be retrained for Medical Technology. In 1968 she was admitted to Seattle University in Washington where she completed the prerequisites for internship in Medical Technology at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago.

After she became a certified Medical Technologist in 1972, she worked for a short time at Oakwood Hospital in Dearborn, and then at Darling, grace-harper in Detroit where she was employed in cancer research. Through Wayne State University School of Medicine Oncology Department, Sister was selected to be sent to the M.D. Anderson Tumor Institute in Houston, Texas, for six weeks training in operating leukopheresis equipment for the mechanical separation of blood cells in the treatment of leukemia patients. When the equipment was set up in a laboratory in Harper Hospital, Sister was employed to operate it.

In a letter to Sister Margaret Brennan dated November 7, 1974, Dr. Thomas Broukar from the Oncology Department describing the work of Sister Michelle wrote: "Sister Lefevre alone is the only individual with the knowledge and technical capability to operate the cell separator...it is the general consensus of the Wayne State University Department of Oncology and the Grace Hospital that the achievements of the Leikapheresis Laboratory over the past year are a direct consequence of the efforts of Sister Lefevre. Both the current achievements and the future goals of the laboratory are directly dependent upon the individual dedication and the sincerity of Sister Michelle Lefevre."

With regret Sister was forced to submit a letter of resignation in April 1981, giving poor health for her decision. Again, she retrained for a less strenuous position in the office of Mt. Carmel Hospital, but again that work too was more than her nine years struggle with cancer could contend. Eventually she returned to the Motherhouse where after five weeks of intense suffering in the Health Care Center her soul was freed---set free to join the God she had so lovingly served.

Sister Catherine Walrad