

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Clara Van De Beuken

BORN: January 1918

ENTERED CONGREGATION: December 10, 1937

DIED: September 12, 2011

WE are here in this chapel to celebrate the life of Sister Clara Van De Beuken. As dawn was breaking on September 12, Clara, as she was known to us, went home to her loving Father.

Clara was born in January 1918 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the ninth of thirteen children. She was the daughter of Frank and Appolonia (Weidig) Van De Beuken, who both immigrated to the United States from Germany. When Clara was six years old, for health reasons, the entire family moved to Phoenix, Arizona. In her own words, Clara described her childhood as a happy one; even though her family was very poor and they worked very hard on their twelve acre citrus grove. It was in Phoenix that Clara got to know the Sisters of the Precious Blood, for it was her family that kept the Sisters supplied in fruit during the Depression years.

Clara was educated by our Sisters. She went to grade school and high school at St Mary's in Phoenix. It was during her high school years that Clara came to realize that she had a vocation to religious life and wanted to enter the convent after graduation. While Clara knew that her parents needed her and might refuse her if she did the asking; Clara, again in her own words, admitted that she conned Sister Pancratia into asking her parents for her. Even after Sister Pancratia asked, Clara had to work for one year and help her parents "make ends meet" before she could leave. On Friday, December 10, 1937, Clara arrived in Dayton and entered the Sisters of the Precious Blood as a postulant.

As a novice Clara was given the

name of Sister Mary Isidore and on August 15, 1943, Clara made her final profession as a Sister of the Precious Blood. In her early years of ministry Clara worked in seminaries at St. Charles and St. Gregory in Ohio. However, in 1953 she went west to Immaculate Heart Seminary in San Diego where she did domestic work. There she was appointed the local superior although she was the youngest of the Sisters in residence. In 1967, she moved to San Luis Rey for two years and then was assigned to Cure d'Arms in Denver and St Anne's in Arvada. It was in the West that Clara developed another important skill. As one Sister wrote, "By diligently following *Betty Crocker* and other cookbooks as well as receiving lots of encouragement from her Sisters, Clara became an A plus cook."

In her last years at St. Anne's, Clara not only cooked for the parish staff, but she also served the people of God by giving them spiritual food. She would visit the sick and elderly. She would pray with them, cry with them, and made sure they received the Eucharist. Clara was a faithful companion to the dying and to their families. At her retirement liturgy at St. Anne's, the pastor and Clara walked hand-in-hand down the aisle. She was so loved by the people in that parish. In 2000, when she realized that she could no longer safely drive, Clara made a return trip to Dayton to live. In the years that followed she visited the residents of Maria Joseph and the Sisters at Emma. Clara not only fed people but she also fed plants. For a number of years she watered and cared for the outdoor plants by the front door of Salem Heights.

Clara would rise each day at 5:00 a.m., light a candle and pray her morning

prayers. With her prayers completed she was out and about. Sister Brendan Jordan wrote that Clara was "cheerful, contemplative, loving, active, receptive, and accommodating." Sister Brendan also said "Clara has a great circle of friends who are drawn to this woman who always has time to listen, to comfort, and to counsel. Many of them feel that she does not realize the great impact she has on so many people because of her unassuming nature."

Clara loved the outdoors and the beauty of nature. She liked to swim, bike, walk, and climb mountains. She was always, always willing to go to the mountains. Now, in her heavenly home Clara has reached the mountain top.

At the time of her fiftieth jubilee Clara was asked; what does being a member of the congregation mean to you? She wrote "It's a way of life, living and working with some very beautiful people; making community with them by prayer, recreation, work, sharing, loving till we seem to be a part of each other, with all the ups and downs of life, striving for God's presence and approval."

I can honestly say that I did not know Sister Clara and I am the lesser for that. By talking with her friends, and reading her file I missed out on knowing a loving and prayerful woman. I will end this eulogy with Clara's own words. "And He walks with me, and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own' comes to mind as I think of the years gone by when totally unexpected He was there to lighten the burden. It's almost unbelievable to think that so many years are gone by and our meeting may come at any time."

— Sister Linda Pleiman