



## Sr. Charmaine Grilliot

(Mary Celine Therese)

BORN: November 1932

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 15, 1948

DIED: November 15, 2020

**J**ourneys ended, journeys begun: to go where we have never been, to be beyond our past, Moments of lifting up, transcending death, rising in transparent light to the fullness of God's presence. Alleluia." (Journeys Ended, Journeys Begun By: Gregory Norbert)

It is with these words borrowed from a Weston Priory hymn that Sister Charmaine Grilliot chose to begin her biography/reflection written in celebration of her 60th Jubilee as a Sister of the Precious Blood. It was indeed well chosen for that occasion and seems also appropriate for today as we gather to remember a lifetime of "Journeys ended, journeys begun:" a life, "transcending death," "rising in transparent light to the fullness of God's presence."

Charmaine Ann Grilliot, born on November 14, 1932 to Lorraine and Leroy Grilliot in Dayton, Ohio, was the couples only daughter. She was preceded by an older brother Clement and followed by her younger brother Richard. As early as age eight Charmaine felt the call to religious life. Seven years later on August 15, 1948, at age fifteen, Charmaine answered God's call and began her journey with the Sisters of the Precious Blood.

Sister Charmaine studied at the Athenaeum in Cincinnati and at St. Joseph College in Rensselaer, Indiana where she received her Bachelor of English. She later received a Master of English from Ohio State University. Sister put these degrees to good use as a teacher "par excellence" at Queen of Peace, Millville, Ohio, Queen of Angels, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Precious Blood High School, Dayton, Ohio and Immaculate Conception High School, Celina, Ohio.

Sister Charmaine returned to Salem Heights in Dayton in a supervisory role as Dean of Studies for Sisters studying at the University of Dayton. In this role she was instrumental in encouraging these young Sisters to discern their gifts and follow their hearts into fields of study that would utilize those gifts and be life giving for them and for those they ministered to. During this time Sister was called to serve in her first elected position as Councilor for the Southern Region, a clear sign of "a journey ending and a journey yet to begin."

During the Chapter of 1972, at age 39, Sister Charmaine became the youngest Sister to be elected to the position of President of the Sisters of the Precious Blood. A position she held for the next eight years, being re-elected in 1976. Clearly the members of the Congregation recognized Charmaine's strength as

a leader especially her endless energy and willingness to take on challenges, as well as the ability to call others to "provocative thinking," and to have courage to take risks. She not only had trust in her team but also the ability to inspire them to accomplish tasks, "even those we would never have attempted let alone accomplish," commented a member of her Council.

By 1972 the Catholic Church was well into the journey of renewal and change begun with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). As the Church began to change so too came changes to religious life. Sister Charmaine and the newly elected leadership team were met with many journeys ending as large numbers of Sisters were choosing to leave the congregation. No longer could ministries be maintained. This called for long loving looks at properties, institutions, and ministries and the eventual closing and saying goodbye to people and places where we had ministered for years. The wellbeing of the Congregation, the structure, integrity and guiding principles all needed to be examined.

These were challenging time for the Sisters of the Precious Blood, challenging times for many Congregation. Not all Congregation had the foresight, the courage to make the hard decisions or the leadership capable of seeing possibilities and opportunities to navigate a path through the turmoil. God has been good to the Sisters of the Precious Blood, blessing us with courageous forward- thinking leadership.

Sister Charmaine proudly takes her place not within this group, but clearly standing on the shoulders of those who came before her. From this vantage point she had a clear view of the past. She recognized the vision of those who preceded her and the changes that were already in motion. The top down structure had already begun to level out with the creation of regions and regional governance. Open placement was well underway giving each Sister a voice in the direction that ministry and communal living would evolve into. These changes had rendered community documents obsolete and the creation of "One in Love" would not be enough to sustain the Mission and Charism of the Congregation into the future.

Standing on the shoulders of those who preceded her, Charmaine had a view of the landscape ahead with the peaks and valleys that would need to be navigated. From this vantage point Sisters were invited to be part of the conversations and processes that would lead to the creation and ownership of the path forward. The creation of our "Way of Life." This truly was a time of: Journeys

ended, journeys begun: to go where we have never been, to be beyond our past, moments of lifting up, transcending death, rising in transparent light to the fullness of God's presence.

Sister Charmaine was 47 years of age when she completed her terms in Leadership, still a relatively young woman with new journeys yet to come. She took some time to catch her breath and ponder the terrain that lay ahead. With a desire to deepen her prayer life and spirituality she completed a year-long program earning a "Diploma in Spiritual Theology" at Regis College in Toronto Canada. At the end of the program she was offered a position as Director of Spirituality in the Diocese of Toronto and Assistant to the Director of the Diaconate Program.

Sister Charmaine left Toronto in 1984 to take a position in St. Louis at Catholic Health Association of the USA. In 1987 she moved back to the northeast taking a position as Director of Education and Evangelization with the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown in Pennsylvania. After eleven years in Pennsylvania Sister decided it was time to take a break and treated herself to a year-long sabbatical. In 2000 as the new Millennium rolled around, she moved back to Dayton to care for her mother whose health was failing. Not being a person to have much down time she also offered her services as a spiritual director and provided adults retreat opportunities in the Dayton area. As her mother's health declined, she became a full-time caregiver. After her mother's death, Sister Charmaine returned to her first love, education, and coordinated the Catholic Urban Project for the inner-city Dayton Catholic Schools. This project resulted in the closing of several schools and the consolidation of the remaining three schools. Charmaine remained with the newly formed Mary Queen of Peace School from 2006-2009. This officially was the end of a long journey of service to God's people.

On Saturday morning, November 14, Sister Charmaine's 88th birthday, it became very clear that the celebrations planned for that day would not be happening. Sister was in the midst of her earthly journey ending. There was an expectation that she would be with us for a few more days. However, at 12:02 on Sunday morning, November 15, Charmaine was celebrating with her signature hearty laugh a journey just beginning, "to go where she had never been, to be beyond the past, Moments of lifting up, transcending death, rising in transparent light to the fullness of God's presence. Amen, Alleluia."

— Sister Patty Kremer