

## **SISTER ESPERANCE WITTRY, CSJ**

January 13, 1920 ~ May 18, 2016

Born on a farm near Marshall, Minnesota, attended a small district school, assumed responsibilities at home, entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1941, earned a PhD in 1960, retired to Bethany Convent in 1997 and moved to Carondelet Village when it opened in 2011. That is Sister Esperance Wittry—but there is so much more!

Sister's family meant a great deal to her. Her only sibling was a brother who made lovely art objects which she often gave to others to enjoy. Her family supported her decision to enter the convent and she was pleased when she could introduce them to other sisters.

Esperance began teaching grade and high school even as she worked toward a BA from The College of St. Catherine (now St. Catherine University) even though she had no high school diploma, that requirement having been waived for her. Her teaching days at St. Catherine began in 1960. Her classes were not easy, but she taught by carefully explaining things, never "talking down" to students, and being very careful of details. When St. Mary Hall opened she became the first "prefect" there and remained in that position until she moved to Bethany in 1997. She enjoyed the students—in her classroom and in the residence hall.

Gifted with a fine intelligence, she used it well, and was one of two women who received Pre-Doctoral National Science Foundation grants in 1956. The work she did on her PhD at Notre Dame ended with her thesis which was "Electroretinal Responses to Electromagnetic Radiation". Her work led to several publications, some co-written by her advisor at Notre Dame. As a part of her program in Biology and Zoology she had to spend one summer at Wood's Hole in Maine where she worked in marine biology, something she always wanted to do and so thoroughly enjoyed.

Whether it was from her work in science, her rural background, or her real joy in all things, she had a sense of beauty and demonstrated it in her life. Pots of violets bloomed in her room and on many windowsills in St. Mary Hall. Her hand-work pieces were gifts to many friends and relatives, each piece perfectly made with beautiful colors. Her appreciation of nature and its beauty was also evident in her own living space with growing plants carefully tended and homemade art pieces used throughout. While living at Bethany, she made many items for the gift shop there and spent time arranging and selling them.

Though quiet and unassuming, Sister Esperance did love to travel. Bus trips around the country (and Canada) and shorter car trips "up north" were her delights. Very often a

beautiful scrap book would appear shortly after a trip and it would contain all of her mementos of that trip. On car trips she was a great help to the driver as she reviewed all written materials about the area, noted points of interest all would enjoy and then scanned the maps to figure out where to go. She was a most congenial traveling companion.

Sister Esperance lived simply all her life and remained in her own apartment as her health declined. Her final illness was brief and she died on May 18, 2016. She now sees and hears all the beauty she so loved.

Sister Esperance is survived by four nieces, a nephew, many grandnieces and nephews and great grand nieces and nephews; her dear friend, Debby Gray; and the Sisters of St. Joseph and Consociates.

Mass of Christian Burial was offered Wednesday, May 25 in Our Lady of the Presentation Chapel at St Joseph's Provincial House, 1880 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul, MN. Burial at Resurrection Cemetery followed the liturgy.

*May Esperance rest in peace.*

*~ Written by Anne Elise Tschida, CSJ*