



**Sharing of Memories of Mary Therese (Joselyn) Pfeifer, BVM**  
Caritas Studio, Sept. 15, 2020

**Irene Lukefahr, BVM**

Many of us remember the excitement and blessings of Vatican II and what it brought to religious life and to our Church. Many of us also can remember the challenges that accompanied Vatican II. One of those challenges that I recall was when two BVM faculties in Kansas City, Mo., switched schools in the middle of the school year in January 1969. Jean Beste was principal at Christ the King and Therese Pfeifer was principal at St. Therese Little Flower at the time. Both Jean and Therese were very affected by this switch, as were all the BVMs who taught in those two schools. I was one of those BVMs. Jean was my principal for my first two-and-a-half years of teaching at Christ the King and Therese became my principal during my final semester at Christ the King. Forty-five years after the switch, I had the opportunity of reconnecting with Therese when I ministered to our sisters at Mount Carmel. Therese and I had many conversations during those six years. I was often a sounding board for Therese as she recounted some of the many challenges she faced with the pastor of Christ the King after the switch. In other conversations, Therese took great delight in telling me about her faithful students who came to visit her even 50 years after she was their fifth grade teacher. I came to know Therese's kindness, especially for the sisters with whom she had lived in Kansas City and whom she cared for until each one passed away. Many times I witnessed her patience with others, including Marie Neff. Marie depended upon Therese to answer questions for which Marie no longer remembered the answers. Therese was quiet, gentle, generous, and very grateful for the wonderful care she was given each and every day, even as it became more difficult for Therese to care for yourself. Thank you, Therese, for the loving support and encouraging words that you so often offered me. Go now in peace and joy.

**Sue and George Hardage, friends**

We met Sister Therese and Sister Marie through a mutual friend over 15 years ago. We just shared a very close friendship. Sister Therese and Sister Marie would come to our house at least once a month, if not more, from Missouri to our home in Atlanta, Kan. We would fix all their favorite foods and we would just eat and eat, laugh and laugh, and talk and talk. We would talk about so many things, like the Kansas City Royals. They both loved the Royals. Sister Marie liked to talk about the Kansas City Chiefs with George, who was at our luncheons when available. It was always a really good time and a special afternoon of laughter about their many, many years of teaching. They would share their stories about what they did as principals and what they did as teachers. They were always full of vigor. Sister Therese loved teaching the little ones and was always researching creative ways to teach them the alphabet and how to write their names. This was very important to her; she wanted them to know how to write their names.

Sister Therese became a regular visitor to my mother, who lived with us for many years until she passed away. My mother always looked forward to these very special visits with Sister Therese, and with Sister Marie. They always laughed and my mother was always happy after they left as she remembered the funny stories they told. I remember the one holiday that the sisters spent in our home with our extended family. We must have had at least 30 people and every kind of food because everyone brought something. Sister Therese remembered every name of every person and never failed to mention those people when we spoke. She mentioned the little one who sat on a chair with her and sang songs. She always loved others and showed her love. The sisters were always excited to make the drive from Kansas City to Dubuque to visit with their friends in the Motherhouse. Sometimes we would make them snacks for the trip. We would pray the trip would be safe as they drove it all in one day. We

were always glad when they were safely home. Then the day came when they made the decision to move to Dubuque permanently. We missed them so much. We stayed in touch by phone and cards. We even made a special trip to visit them in Dubuque. They took us on a first-class guided tour all over the Motherhouse. George and I could hardly keep up with them; they were both in very good health at that time and had a lot of energy. They were so thrilled that they had made the adjustment and could call Dubuque home.

I treasure the memories of the special times and the love we shared. We will never, ever forget our deep, deep friendship. Sister Therese would say, "You are part of our family." I remember her beautiful smile and her eyes so bright they sparkled. Rest in peace, my dear Sister Therese.

#### **Brett Pfeifer, cousin**

An incredible lady, a humble, passionate servant of God through her tireless service to young people, and a wonderful role model. I was proud to know you and call you my cousin, Sister Therese. You will be truly missed by many. May God grant you eternal peace and joy in His heavenly kingdom! (Please give my dad, Gary, a big hug for me.)

#### **Father Paul Turner, St. Regis Grade School**

I just saw the news about Sister Therese Pfeifer. I want to offer my condolences to the other sisters of the community. She was a great inspiration, a fine administrator, and a loyal friend of the Church—and even of me! May she rest in peace.

#### **Charalin Simon, nurse, Mount Carmel Bluffs**

Therese Pfeiffer was a good organizer. She was generous. She shared one of her new extra bags for us nurses to store and carry our supplies to her room. She was content. "I have enough. It was a good day," she would say with a wide closed smile and light in her eyes. She was an encourager. When I would sing "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us. God has commended his love toward us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5). She smiled and said, "Yes. That's right. I love you!" There is more, but I will end with thanks be to God for being able to serve Therese and all of you dear Sisters.

#### **John Sonderman, St. Regis Class of 1993**

I was fortunate enough to have Sister Therese as my teacher for both fourth and fifth grades at St. Regis Catholic Elementary School in Kansas City, Mo. To call her an amazing teacher is an understatement. She managed to obtain the perfect balance as a teacher. She was very structured and could be firm, while also being so kind, approachable, and empathetic. I had wonderful teachers at St. Regis all the way through, but I would say that Sister Therese is the one with whom I truly had a connection and a relationship. She noticed me. The impact of her relationship did wonders for me as a person. She built character and self-esteem in her students. I will never forget her kindness or her smile.

#### **Brad Barackman**

Sister Therese was my principal at St. Therese Little Flower elementary school in Kansas City, Mo. One of the many BVM nuns that made a difference in my life. RIP sister.

#### **Rosemary Surby, BVM**

I met Therese (Jocelyn) when I was missioned to St. Therese Little Flower in Kansas City, Mo. She was the principal and I was the eighth grade teacher for several years. She was such a happy person, loving with the children, and really nice to live with. We had many happy times there, especially on Halloween. She was the envy of the other principals in the area since three really young sisters (Mary Ellen Meckley, Cornelia Harrison, and I) were assigned to teach that same year and was kidded about it whenever we went to meetings. She has been a long-time friend of mine. I corresponded regularly and visited her here in the house many times in the last eight years, helping her with the computer and sharing stories of the past. She and Marie Neff were good friends also and she took care of

her during the years here in so many ways until Marie passed away. She will be remembered lovingly for all she gave to me in friendship.

#### **Elaine Schuster Allee**

Sister Mary Therese Pfeifer was the Lord's servant for many years in the Kansas City area. The last years she made her home as part of St. John Francis Regis community and was the "backbone" of the school. Many years after retirement, Sister Therese would be found in my kindergarten classroom helping in every way, but especially she enjoyed working one-on-one with a child, encouraging and listening to them read. Sister Therese became "family" in 2006 when my home "blew away" in a tornado and my dog Maggie and I lived in the convent for seven months during restoration. We shared holidays, joys, sorrows, prayers, and fun until Sister moved to Mount Carmel. Sister Therese and I shared many hours of phone conversation keeping her informed of Regis Church happenings, Maggie, our own families, Royals, Chiefs, jokes, and loving conversation. I am very thankful for all Sister Therese has been to me through the years. May she rest in peace.

#### **Penny Pfeifer**

Sister Therese was the sweetest and most wonderful person. Everyone felt the love that surrounded her. She was my spiritual guide, never tiring of answering all my questions. She was a friend that I could ask her to pray for my concerns. Sister Therese, I will miss you and your precious smile. In heaven, please continue to pray for us. We still need your prayers.

#### **Janis Grabmiller**

What a beautiful soul! My first teaching position was under the leadership of Sister Therese at Christ the King School in 1975. She taught me by an example of kindness and compassion. I give thanks that I was blessed with a leader who always put children and families first. Rest now, Sister Therese, in God's true peace.

#### **Lisa McClenahan Carr**

Sister Mary Therese was my principal at Christ the King (Class of 1983). Sister Therese, you are often in my thoughts and in my prayers.

#### **Wanda Treu, niece**

One of the best memories of Aunt Mary was how good she was to her sister Claire. She came to visit a couple times a year and always stayed in her room and slept on her couch. They had such nice visits which cheered Claire immensely.

#### **Patricia Donahoe, BVM**

In Kansas City, Mo., at St. Therese Little Flower, as Sr. Mary Joselyn, Therese was superior of the convent and principal of the elementary school. Our pastor was the Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese. She was a hard-working school woman and a dedicated principal. As a superior in charge of a group of women, she was nurturing and kind to a cohesive group. She was loyal to those with whom she had lived and was very involved with her family. When there was serious illness in her family, she helped care for the individual. She also kept in touch with the family of a deceased BVM. In later years, when she met a faculty member she would recall positive memories of those previous times.

#### **Diane Forster, BVM**

Therese was at Christ the King School and convent in Kansas City, Mo., during the years I was at St. Regis School and parish, a few miles away. The KC houses met throughout those years for various discussions and events. As I met or worked with Therese for these, I realized she took care of many, many things—in school, in the house, and in leading and caring for the sisters at Christ the King. Several of them endured serious health issues during those years. For a time, Therese was the only driver among them, and either drove or made arrangements for sisters' appointments, for household needs, for meetings, etc. In conversation, I appreciated Therese's insight and sensitivity about others and their needs. Therese moved to Mount Carmel in 2011 after many, many years of

serving in Kansas City Catholic schools. During those years, Therese came to visit at Mount Carmel in the summers, especially after the sisters who had served at Christ the King with her became residents. She was so faithful to those relationships, as she was to her family when a sibling needed help or care. She likewise was a faithful friend to Marie Neff, as dementia became apparent for Marie. Therese at last can rest from her many labors.

### **Woman of the Heartland**

She is a valiant woman  
her roots are firmly planted  
the kingdom is within her  
her heart is treasure-filled.

She is a sturdy woman  
whose heart and arms withstand  
the pressures and the worries  
that each new day unfolds.

She is a patient woman  
waiting through storm and night  
For new life, new growth, rich harvest.

She is a long woman  
ever giving and forgiving  
every caring and concerned.

She is a sharing woman  
who with arms outstretched  
gives of her gifts and treasures  
to those both near and far.

She is a kingdom woman  
her vision reaches out  
to the heartland for all people  
a heartland beyond time

*From **Woman's Song** by Sister Imelda Cougar, SC*