



Sharing of Memories of Otilie Sana, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, June 1, 2022

John Sana, Brother

Tillie was a wonderful daughter, sister, teacher, and trailblazer for her younger brothers. She was the first child in the Sana family and had three younger brothers, one of whom died when she was 2 or 3 years old. Tillie was a saint for putting up with her brothers because I know that we didn't always make life easy for her.

Our parents were immigrants from Czechoslovakia. We only spoke Czech at home, and went to a Czech class on Wednesday after school and on Saturday morning. Our grandmother lived with us, and because of that, Tillie had to sleep in the living room on the couch. We had a two-bedroom house, with our parents in one room and the boys and grandma in the other. I'm not sure how much sleep she got because Dad worked nights at a Czech newspaper and came home at 3:00 in the morning.

We grew up next door to Mary, Queen of Heaven church and across the alley from the convent. Tillie had polio when she was very young, and it affected her right hand, but she played the French horn in high school.

Tillie was always a giver of self and a person of very few words, but you would know what she was thinking. She loved the Lord, her community, friends, students, the needy and her family. She always wanted to be the outside, not on the inside! We called each other every week, up until she passed. She was my role model and a saint. I thank God for her and will miss her!

Sue & Joseph Sana, Sister-in-law & Brother

Joe and I have wonderful memories of Tillie. She was a loving and caring person and became a big part of our family for many years. There were many summers when Tillie spent a week at our house to catch up on family and rest up for the coming year. Tillie came to our home and my sister Sue's home for Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, graduations, and other milestone events in our lives. Tillie and the other sisters worked hard for the food pantry at Holy Family. We know Tillie loved working with young people to achieve their GED. We've spoken with Tillie over the phone and have seen her on facetime calls recently. Joe and I would have loved to have been there with her, but traveling has been impossible. We are so sad that she is gone but are glad and consoled by the fact that she is out of pain and at peace.

John & Carol Semerau (Carol is the sister of Sue Sana, the wife of Joseph Sana.

Tillie (as we called her) was truly a good person. She was kind and giving, always soft spoken, not a complainer, and a wonderful teacher. We enjoyed Tillie's company at many holiday and birthday celebrations. Tillie never came without bringing a gift either for the hostess or for our grandchildren. We all have fond memories of her. She will be missed by all who knew her.

Kathleen & Jerry Walton, Members of the Holy Family Faith Community, Chicago. (Read by Sister Anne Buckley, BVM)

Holy Family Faith Community will forever remember Sister Otilie's loving-kindness and the warm embrace she generously shared every Sunday during the Kiss of Peace. Her eyes' soft gleam and warm smile touched everyone's Heart.

Sister Otilie humbly served Holy Family Faith Community and the surrounding neighborhood for many years. Together with her faithful companion, Sister Marion Murphy, she worked in the GED program with anyone who wanted to further their education or earn their GED. Together they opened the Holy Family Food Pantry providing food to those most in need and building lasting friendships. You would often find them walking through the neighborhood, listening to people's stories, praying with them, and, if they could, offering help.

Sister Otilie, "seeing with her compassionate heart" children and adults in our parish who did not have the financial resources to buy Christmas gifts for their family and friends, organized annual Christmas bazaars. She extended the invitation to parishioners to donate new or "looks new" items, and the response was overwhelming. A team of parishioners organized and priced the items. After church in December, parishioners and neighborhood friends enjoyed browsing and buying top-of-the-line gifts. Everyone who attended left with a big bag of gifts and a joyful heart. Sister Otilie's bazaars united Holy Family Faith Community as the Body of Christ and awakened us more deeply to the needs of others.

Dear Sister Otilie Sana, BVM, and all the other deceased BVM sisters who dwell in the fullness of God's love, we love you and pray your humble and loving spirits, and your thirst for justice will continue to live in and through us.

Sister Anne Buckley, BVM

Tillie had a wonderful sense of humor. I wish I was could at telling jokes, but I can't remember anything she said except for one thing. They were checking her heart the day before she went to the hospital. She only had 30% part of her heart working, but we didn't know that until later when they did the tests. The nurse said to her while pointing to me, "Do you know her?" She said, "What the heck; of course I know her!"

Sister Mary McCauley, BVM

I had the privilege of living and working with Otilie during her years at St. Thomas the Apostle in West Hempstead, N.Y., where she served as a very committed and excellent sixth grade teacher. And I am very aware of her faithful presence and service at Holy Family in Chicago. When I think of Otilie and her special presence and service within our BVM community, certain words come to mind – faithful, kind, strong, loving, determined, sincere, humble, patient, compassionate, gracious, honest and you can add others. The students and parents at St. Thomas the Apostle respected Otilie because they knew she respected and loved every single student in her classroom. I believe the same was true during her years at Holy Family as she assisted many with reading and obtaining their GED. Otilie will always be a model of endurance, love, service, and kindness. I feel very privileged to have known and served with her and loved her.

Sister Mary Martens, BVM

I entered the Set of 1954 along with Otilie and so many others. We began with the hymn "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman, quiet light . . . Although I never lived with or even in the same city as Otilie, when she moved back to Mount Carmel, I would see her so frequently. Besides the "gentle woman and quiet light," there must have been some inner fire and the wonderful adjectives that Mary McCauley just mentioned inside of Otilie because, no matter how slowly Otilie continued to walk, as long as she was upright, she and her faithful friend Anne Buckley continued to walk on the river side of the Motherhouse step after step after step. And I thought, what courage. Otilie, enjoy the set from your new vantage point. We love you.

Sister Kathleen Mullin, BVM

Back in 1969 at the Senate at Mundelein, Sister Danetta Buser came to Bertha Fox and me and said, "Would you come to Annunciation convent one of the nights of the Senate and help us understand what's happening at this Senate. Otilie one of those who suggested this because she and Bertha are in the same set and were both on the liturgy team. So, we went to that convent. That was the night that became my friendship with Otilie even though I knew who she was since she was a senior novice to us. I had the great privilege, not of living with her, but of companioning her and being companioned by her in lots of ways. Several times I visited her classrooms and had

great awe of her ability as teacher and mentor for the children. Through the years, I had acquaintance with her parents. I realized that her sense of hospitality and caring was something she absorbs from her mother and dad. It is a great joy for me to think of where Otilie is now, and with us in a new way, and totally, totally her best self. I am forever grateful to have known her.

Sister Margaret Sannasardo, BVM

When Otilie was at St. Genevieve parish in Chicago, she lived with about twenty Sisters of Providence. I would visit her as her regional. It was always so much fun because I knew many of the SP nuns and it was always such a fun time with them. I can tell you, they *loved* Otilie. She was such a dear to them and so inspiring to them. I can remember them many times mentioning how good she was, how gentle she was, how faithful and prayerful she was. It was a very special experience for me to visit. I also visited her with her family. I loved the Czech spirit, very loving and hospitable. I feel very privileged to have met the family and to have known Otilie for those years.

Sister Carol Atchity, BVM, Springfield, Mo.

I lived with Tillie for two wonderful years in Chicago at Annunciation, which at that time was the provincial house. Tillie and I were close buddies. She used to sense when I would sneak down at night to the kitchen to get a snack and she would be sitting on the step to catch me. She was such a gentle, understanding person and was loved by us so much.

Tillie took me to her home in Cicero, Ill., to visit her mom and dad and we spent the night. This happened more than once. Her mom baked such wonderful sweets. I clearly remember we sat at the kitchen table and shared so much laughter and love. Before bedtime, her dad and I would have a beer and visit and then call it a day.

When I came to Springfield, Tillie came to visit. I was employed at Mercy with the Mercy Sisters. Tillie put on a pink jacket and volunteered while I was at work. We went to Branson, Mo., and had a week of sharing fun, shows, and food, not to mention a deepening of our friendship. I feel Tillie with me now, and I thank her for the beautiful memories she gave me so unselfishly. To me, she was one who really lived life and carried on no matter what. Rest in peace, dear friend. You are and always will be a part of me. I love you, Tillie.

Eileen Crowley, former BVM, Honolulu, Hawaii.

I was honored to work with a team of wonderful and very high-spirited workers one day each week at the Holy Family food pantry. Sister Otilie worked with me, and her sense of humor kept the group in high spirits! What wonderful days we had, finding, packing, and distributing the bags of food for our grateful parishioners. Most of us will think Sister is at peace in the hands of Our Lord, but I have a feeling that she will be very busy trying to help us out finding food for the poor.

Sister Anne Buckley, BVM

One of my fondest memories of Otilie was when she was visiting her mother. I think her father had died by that time. She sat on the edge of the chair by her mother and sang all of her favorite hymns. It was simply the loveliest thing.

Terri O'Hara

I have fond memories of Sister Otilie leading our rambunctious 4th grade class at Holy Name Cathedral. Rest in Peace.

Jan Zeller, Friend, Evanston, Ill.

I had the pleasure of meeting Sister Otilie at the Siena Retreat Center many years ago. We continued our friendship on the west side of Chicago. Her outreach and service to the community were inspirational.