



Sr. Mary Louise Hoelscher

(Sister Mary Gaspar)

BORN: September 1927

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 3, 1944

DIED: July 9, 2013

Mary Louise Hoelscher was born to Louise and Henry Hoelscher in September 1927 in Dayton, Ohio. She was the youngest and only girl with four older brothers – Al, Robert, Walter and Dick, now all deceased. They were all praying for a girl and then couldn't believe it when it happened! Mary Lou lost her mother at a young age. She loved to do all the things the boys did. Her mother told her she was going to buy her some land so that she could live out there with her animals.

Mary Lou was first introduced to the Sisters of the Precious Blood when she and her father would drive from their rural Dayton home to Regina Heights to purchase fresh vegetables for his grocery store and restaurant. Here Mary Lou first became acquainted with CPPS through Sister Mary Sixta. Sister Sixta was very nice to Mary Lou and gave her candy. Although Mary Louise was taught by the Notre Dame Sisters, she begged her father and brothers to take her to the convent. They did not want her to go. Finally, Robert, one of her brothers took her to the convent, against her father's wishes.

Mary Lou was known in religion as Sister Mary Gaspar. Mary Lou wrote: "My early memories of Juniorate, Postulate and Novitiate stand out vividly in my mind. The ups and downs of a transition in life helped in the bonding we had for one another in those early days."

Mary Lou's education ministry lasted 46 years. Eight years in elementary education were at St. Mary's, Phoenix; Queen of Peace, Mesa; St. Mary's, Day-

ton and Precious Blood, Ft. Wayne and Christ the King, Denver. She finished her Bachelor's Degree at St. Joe's, Rensselaer, Ind. Then off she went into her high school career of 38 years. She began at the Academy of the Little Flower, with an interruption for her MS in Science, then back to the Academy, followed by Central Catholic in Lafayette, Indiana, and Gerard High School in Phoenix. In high school, she taught math, science, and was a department chair and assistant principal.

From there Mary Lou traveled 300 miles northeast following the Mogollon Rim to the Navajo Reservation. She worked at Window Rock, Ft. Defiance, and Sanders High schools teaching math, and directing the hospitality program, adult education and work/study programs Mary Lou always felt honored to serve the Navajo people. She wrote: "Giving and receiving life from the Navajos, sharing their family spirit and enjoying the beauty of their country, deepened my own love for others and led to a forgetfulness of self." During this time, she also served one term as Regional Councilor for the West.

Always wanting to be of service after retirement from teaching, Mary Lou was Chaplain at the Indian Health Hospital and local nursing home in Manuelita, N.M. She spent ten years as Vicar of Religious for the Diocese of Gallup. She also taught in the Deacon/Lay Ministry Program for the Diocese of Gallup.

In between times, she loved the outdoors camping, hiking, traveling, fishing and reading.

We would be amiss if we did not speak specifically of her great love for the Na-

vajo people whom she served. She wrote "Living on the reservation is like being in a third world environment, hauling my own water like the Navajos, and living the simple life is gospel-like living for me. All of this makes me grateful for what I have. All in all, living a life in contradiction to the life of the people in this materialistic world in which we live has been a challenge and a reward in my life."

I am grateful to the congregation for all the opportunities I have had. I feel that I have a full life – spiritually, physically, and mentally – and hope that I can continue to serve people and their needs. God has been good to me and I am grateful."

Among the Navajo, spirituality is based on harmony with nature. This means order, harmony, blessedness, pleasantness, everything that is good, not evil, everything that is favorable to mankind, this being the overall goal to which everyone and everything should strive. Death of old age was desirable, because it brought contentment with it in this life and no fear in the next. An old chart is:

I walk with beauty before me
I walk with beauty behind me
I walk with beauty below me
I walk with beauty above me
I walk with beauty around me

Actions, not words, are proof of genuine love. Your life, Mary Lou, of simplicity and self-giving suffices to prove that divine life burned within you. You heard the Lord call, "Whom Shall I send?" You answered, Here I am. Send me.

Walk in beauty

— Sister Mary Yarger