



## Sr. Mary Louise Ante

(Sister Mary Benildes)

BORN: August 1921

ENTERED CONGREGATION: July 27, 1943

DIED: September 27, 2007

**O**N behalf of our congregation, I welcome the family and friends of Sister Mary Louise Ante: her nephew, Robert and his wife, Yuking, their daughter, Zella, and a number of her friends. With us today to celebrate Sister Mary Louise's life is Father Don Huebner, chaplain here at Salem Heights, Father Bill O'Donnell, CPPS, pastor of Precious Blood Parish, and Father Reynaldo Taylor, parochial vicar and friend from St. Peter Parish in Huber Heights. As we celebrate, we include many of Sister Mary Louise's friends who are with us in spirit, especially the Breakfast Club members and other parishoners of Mission San Luis Rey Parish in Oceanside, Calif.

Born in Covington, Ky. (which she called "Greater Cincinnati"), Mary Louise was the daughter of Hubert and Rose (Schulte) Ante. With the death of her parents at a young age, Mary Louise was raised by her grandmother and by her brother, Tony. She was educated in Catholic schools and was proud to be one of the "Golden Girls" of Notre Dame Academy.

Tony had two sons, Jimmy, who was killed in Vietnam, and Robert, who is with us today. Mary Louise was close to her sister-in-law, affectionately known as "Sis" and visited her often until Sis's death a little over a year ago. Sister Mary Louise often lamented that her family was small in number and that she really did not know her mother; yet she cherished the love and joy she shared with Sister Peg Williams' family. She delighted in telling me that they would call her Aunt Mary — she especially loved the Louisville accent of "Aunt Mary."

Shortly after high school, Mary Louise went into St. Louis Church in downtown Cincinnati. She noticed a booklet, *Doing Something Big for Christ*. She looked at it, but left without it. And then she went back to get it — not only to get the book but to follow through by contacting the Precious Blood Sisters at St. Mark's. Sister Stephana Kamp brought Mary Louise to Dayton and shortly thereafter she entered. However, a year and a half later she was sent home for health reasons.

Mary Louise stayed in contact with the Sisters of the Precious Blood working at Mount St. Mary Seminary. She returned to Salem Heights on July 27, 1943, was invested as a novice and again given the name Sister Mary Benildes. Her other classmates became novices in August.

Although her first assignment was at the former St. Joseph Orphanage here in Dayton where she took care of the boys, professionally Mary Louise was an educator. As a teacher and principal she served in Rensselaer, Ind.; Sedalia, Mo.; Linto, N.D.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; Celina and Norwood, Ohio; Denver and Phoenix.

Those are all *places*, and yet it is the *people* in those places who were touched by her life. As principal she knew every child by name and was "on top of" the family situations. And, as a good Sister of the Precious Blood, she recorded the names of all the students in her little black book. She insisted the teachers be genuinely Christian and Catholic in their teaching and to do their best. The teachers, in turn loved her, and had Mary Louise presented with the "Boss of the Year" award from the Arizona branch of the American Business Women's Association.

...I have been struck by the people across the country who have cherished knowing Sister Mary Louise Ante. Mary Louise was in Celina more than 50 years ago, and a family from there visited a few weeks ago to enjoy a three-hour lunch with Sister Mary Louise. A class from the early 1950s, from Fort Wayne, has stayed in contact with her. She was loved by folks throughout the Phoenix area.

When Sister Mary Louise discerned retirement from being principal of St. Thomas in Phoenix, she said yes to Sister Dottie Schmiesing's call to be co-administrator of Mission San Luis Rey Parish in Oceanside, Calif. Mary Louise described her San Luis Rey years as very happy ones. She was happy to be living with CPPS community and being with faith-filled adults. Mary Louise did many tasks and wore many hats at San Luis Rey, and yet what she cherished the most was the relationships she shared with her community, the staff and the parishoners.

Leaving San Luis Rey was difficult and yet she said she was coming home to Salem Heights. She became very involved in the CPPS community, working on the Salem Heights advisory council, serving as receptionist, driving other sisters to visit relatives or do a little shopping, assisting some seminarians with their college work, walking the journey as a sponsor for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults at Precious Blood Parish, and the list could go on — all done with love. She loved being a Sister of the Precious Blood and was grateful to God for her vocation and life's journey.

I asked her classmates to give me something to say. Here are some of their comments:

— She always enjoyed doing a little bit of everything; that was true whether as teacher, principal, at San Luis Rey or here at Salem Heights.

— She had a sense of humor.

— She was a woman for the "underdog," she knew when someone was hurting.

— She had a big heart for the poor, for people who were hurting. John and Jane Ebert from San Luis Rey shared that when the morning Mass group went for breakfast on Saturdays, Sister Mary Louise would give John 35 cents to buy a newspaper. One Saturday some people were begging outside the restaurant and Mary Louise gave them her money. John teased Mary Louise that now he had to buy her breakfast *and* her newspaper! Every week after that the 35 cents brought smiles to all.

Mary Louise volunteered as a receptionist at both Huffman Place and Hoover Place, the residential buildings I manage. Her love for the residents made me aware of her love of education and learning. In these last years she not only learned names and the needs of people, she allowed herself to be taught by the people. She asked the residents how they were doing. The Hoover residents say, "I am blessed!" One day Mary Louise said, "I need to respond like that, because I am blessed." She was not only blessed, but we were blessed by her and blessed that she was a Sister of the Precious Blood.

...She had asked me to take care of her room when something happened to her. As I worked in her room after her death, I found a copy of her baptismal certificate. I was surprised to see *Anna Maria* Louise Ante. I immediately thought of Maria Anna Brunner, the woman who founded our congregation. Today is Mother Brunner's birthday and the words of Mother Brunner came to mind: "I hope to contribute to this good work even in eternity."

Sister Mary Louise not only shares a similar name; the good work she did will continue even in eternity, because the love she shared with us will be in our hearts for a long time.

— Sister Judy Kroeger