

# **‘Big sister’ keeps 100-year-old nun in high spirits**

She’s a full six years younger than 100-year-old Sister Joachim Scally, R.S.M., but that doesn’t stop Sister Kateri Sullivan, R.S.M., from proudly calling herself Sister Joachim’s “big sister.”

Every day, Sister Kateri visits and prays with her friend at The Villa in Baltimore, a retirement community for religious sisters where the two are in residence. Although a failing memory often prevents Sister Joachim from participating fully in the conversation, it’s the companionship that means so much to her.

“We always sit down and talk about the Lord,” said Sister Kateri, who many years ago served as her friend’s principal when Sister Joachim was a fourth-grade teacher at the since-closed Mount Washington Country School for Boys.

“I try to bring her up to date with what’s happening,” Sister Kateri said.

On a recent rainy afternoon, the companions sat in the dining room of their community – both wearing pink blouses and long skirts. With a smile, Sister Kateri leaned close to Sister Joachim’s ear and reminded her about the big 100-year birthday bash held in her honor Aug. 17. Sister Joachim received more than 40 birthday cards that still line the walls of her room, and she enjoyed birthday cake with other sisters in the community.

“Do you remember the big fuss?” Sister Kateri asked with a laugh. “You loved every minute of it.”

Sister Joachim nodded her head slightly, looked in her friend’s direction and acknowledged softly that “it was a nice party.”

Catherine T. Beck, Sister Joachim’s niece, said the loving attention from Sister Kateri “means everything” to her aunt.

“Sister Joachim just lights up when Sister Kateri is around,” said Ms. Beck, a

parishioner of Immaculate Conception in Towson.

“Like all former teachers, I think Sister Joachim has eyes on the back of her head,” said Ms. Beck. “She knows when Sister Kateri is around.”

Sister Joachim, one of nine children, grew up in St. Joseph, Cockeysville, parish and graduated from the Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore in 1927. The daughter of a Pennsylvania railroad worker, she entered the Religious Sisters of Mercy in 1937 before becoming the founding principal of Holy Family School in Randallstown.

Among her other assignments, Sister Joachim taught at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart School in Mount Washington.

“She was a wonderful teacher,” said Sister Kateri, remembering that Sister Joachim sometimes baked treats for the seminarians at St. Mary’s Seminary and University in Roland Park and enjoyed traveling.

Sister Kateri said she considers it an honor to visit her friend.

“You know you are doing a ministry,” she said, “and the older ones really appreciate it.”