

Sister Mary Ita Lashley, vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, dead at 102

Sister Mary Ita Lashley died peacefully on June 21, 2017. She was 102 years of age and lived the religious life she so desired. She was a vowed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 74 years and taught for 44 years in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Maryland, including 10 years in Baltimore at Corpus Christi and St. Andrew schools.

Sister Mary Ita was born in Mt. Savage on May 27, 1915. She was the seventh child of Wayne and Isabelle Lynch Lashley and was later followed by ten more children. The newborn baby girl was baptized at St. Patrick's Church, Mt. Savage, Maryland.

Wayne and Isabelle were proud of their large family. Mary described her father as "quiet" and her mother as the disciplinarian, who taught her children to do things for themselves. Mary took her mother's words to heart. She said, "I can see just why my mother said those things. I was being taught a sense of responsibility for the future."

Mary attended the parish school at St. Patrick's through the tenth grade. The desire to enter the convent was one Mary had since she was in the seventh grade. However, the year after graduation, Mary stayed at home to help her mother with the younger children. She then obtained a job at the Celanese textile plant in Cumberland, Md. where she worked until 1940 giving financial aid to the family during the depression years.

While making a retreat, Mary said that she was "reminded by God of my holy vocation." Mary felt she "received graces in abundance that gave her interior happiness" and knew that she would find what God had destined for her. Mary entered the candidature of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Baltimore on Aug. 28, 1940. She attended classes at the Institute of Notre Dame for two years to complete credits needed for her high school diploma.

Mary was received into the novitiate on Aug. 3, 1942 and was given the name, Mary Ita, after the Irish saint. Sister Mary Ita was professed on Aug. 12, 1943 and sent to teach first through fourth grades at St. Joseph School, Taneytown, Md. (1943-44). Sister Ita's next mission was St. Leo's, Irvington, N.J. where she taught children in the third grade (1944-53). During her years at St. Leo's, Sister Ita received a Bachelor of Science in Education from Seton Hall University (1952). Education was important to her and she enjoyed studying. She was the first and only Lashley child to earn a high school diploma.

The first part of 1954 was spent at St. Joseph School, Garden City, N.Y. Sister Ita then moved to teacher of primary grades at St. John, Westminster, Md. (1954-59). She taught the intermediate grades at Corpus Christi, Baltimore (1959-66), St. Andrew, Baltimore (1966-68), St. Michael (later known as Hollidaysburg Catholic), Hollidaysburg, Pa. (1971-72), St. John, Frederick, Md. (1972-74), Hollidaysburg Catholic (1974-83), and St. Mary, Bryantown, Md. (1983-87). She especially felt at home with and appreciated the simplicity of down to earth people in the rural parishes of Westminster, Bryantown, and Hollidaysburg.

In enumerating the many grades and subjects, Sister Ita taught, she was always particular about mentioning art classes. She was a talented artist and a niece said that she was passionate about her art. In retirement, Sister Ita was one of the Villa Assumpta sisters who met for a watercolor class. An art exhibit held there in 2009 featured many of Sister Ita's works.

When Sister Ita came to Villa Assumpta in 1987, she was active in various areas of community service. She took particular pride, as refectorian, in having the dining room neat and well run. She cared about how the tables looked and with her artist's eye, made things festive and appropriate to the occasion. She enjoyed her turn as receptionist, handling calls at the switchboard and visiting with staff and sisters as they came by. A veteran lector, she used her strong voice for the Mass readings as long as she was able.

The Christian Wake service was held on Tues., June 27 and the Liturgy of Christian Burial on Wed., June 28. Both services were held in the Chapel of Villa Assumpta, Baltimore, Md. Interment followed at Villa Maria Cemetery, Glen Arm, Md. Sister

Mary Ita is survived by her sister, Eileen Herbaldsheimer and nieces and nephews.