



**We remember
Sister Mary Theodore Jensen
1906-2009**

~ a Sister of Mercy for 83 years!

Eulogy given by Sister Monica Reichmuth (cousin to Sister Theodore), Funeral Mass, Jan. 29, 2009

As all of us know, Sister Mary Theodore had many famous sayings. In more recent years, one that I heard her say quite frequently was, "That's the way it is, that's the way it was, and that's the way it will be, until the bear comes home from sea." I never really understood the meaning of: "until the bear comes home from sea." I wonder if it had something to do with her waiting for death to come so that she could go home to God.

Sister Theodore was taken home to God, last Sunday (Jan. 25) early in the morning. Can't you just hear her up there ordering people around, making sure they have enough to eat, and perhaps getting a square dance started? She is probably lining people up so they can swing their partners and do the "do si do."

Sister Mary Theodore was born as Alice Mildred Jensen on October 2, 1906, on a farm near Burke, S.D. She was one of seven children born to John Theodore Jensen and Emma Sinkula. Her siblings: Sister Mary Roch (a Poor Clare nun), Robinette, Geraldine, Evelyn and Theodore have all preceded her in death. She has one living brother now, Jim, who is here with us this morning. He is the famous author and story teller who wrote the books, "A Dog Named Beans" and "Our Life on the Cheyenne Indian Reservation."

Sister Theodore used to talk about the number of relatives she had. She would frequently quote her father as saying, "Don't say anything bad about

anyone because they might be a relative of your mother's."

Sister definitely was a "take charge" person who no doubt learned that skill from her mother who, after the death of her husband, had to take care of seven children on her own. For awhile, Aunt Emma had to separate the family so that she could make ends meet. While she kept house for a priest in Dupree, Ted and Mildred (Sister Mary Theodore) ran the farm on the Kellum Place. Thereafter it seemed that she was a natural at running things.

This is what Sister wrote about why she chose to become a Sister of Mercy. "*I had never seen a nun, but one day a priest said to me, 'Young lady I think you have a religious vocation,' I replied, 'O, I know I do Father'. Then he said, 'You have never seen a nun so what makes you so sure you have a religious vocation?' I said, 'I have never seen a nun father but one thing I am sure of, and that is, if I were a boy I would be a priest.' 'Well, says he, that's good enough for me. I have a dear friend who is a Sister of Mercy and I will send you there.'*

He lost no time in writing to Mother Leo, his friend, and making arrangements for me to enter. I arrived unannounced on Saturday the last day of February, rang the door bell at old Saint Mary's and was greeted by a dear old nun, Sister M. Ursula. I asked to see Mother Leo. Sister asked if it was important. I replied, 'I don't know sister but I was wondering if I could become a Sister of Mercy.' 'O

God help us,' sister exclaimed, and then said, 'I'll get her right away'.

Thus my first meeting with a sister of any order. I was surprised indeed by the dress they wore, but determined if they could do it, so could I. I was staying if they would take me. So the next morning, March 1, 1925, I was given the postulant garb and joined the sisters for community Mass and breakfast. It happened to be retreat Sunday so silence prevailed. A good beginning for a long and happy religious life."

That kind of determination and spunk stayed with Sister Theodore throughout her years of service as a Sister of Mercy.

For a few years, Sister taught school at Saint Wenceslaus and St. Philomena's Schools in Omaha. Once she was given the charge to take care of 85 boys, at Saint James Orphanage, ranging in ages from four to 16 years of age. It was there that she had to set an arm for one of the fifth grade boys.

The boy had fallen and fractured his arm but the intern told the boy to go to bed and it would be all right. Then in the middle of the night one of the eighth grade boys came to sister and said, "Sister, Johnnie is crying. He is hurt real bad." So sister went to the sewing room and found a cigar box containing some bandages to make a splint. Back to Johnnie she went to set his arm and apply the splint. The next day when the doctor made his rounds at the infirmary, she told him what she had done and that he should check the arm and redo it. The doctor took x-rays and told sister that she had done a good job and to leave it alone.

Nursing was her chosen profession and as a nurse she served as a floor supervisor, nursing instructor, anesthetist and director of Saint Catherine's Alumna Association. Throughout most of her professional life she served in Omaha but she also spent some time at hospitals in North Dakota, Pocatello, Idaho, and Coos Bay, Ore. She received a certificate in nursing from Creighton University in Omaha and a certificate as a nursing anesthetist from Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton, S.D.

As her cousin, I remember her many trips to visit us on our farm. As children, we were fascinated with her. She seemed to have so much knowledge and

was interested in everything. She wasn't afraid to ride the tractor or to get up on a horse. Our family thought the world of her and relied on her to be present whenever someone had to go to Saint Catherine's Hospital in Omaha.

Another one of her famous sayings was, "The name of the game is to hang in there." I think this would be her advice to us today. The bear has come home from the sea. Sister Theodore is with her God, her loving family, and all of the Sisters of Mercy who have gone before her. I can hear her saying now, "So that's the way it is, that's the way it was, and that's the way it will be. So that's that!"

Suscipe

My God, I am yours
for time and eternity.
Teach me to cast my whole self
into the arms of your loving Providence
with the most lively unbounded confidence
in your compassionate, tender pity.
Grant O Most Merciful redeemer,
that whatever you ordain or permit
may be always acceptable to me.
Take from my heart all painful anxiety.
Suffer nothing to afflict me but sin;
nothing to delight me but the joy
of coming into the presence of You,
my God,
in your own everlasting kingdom.
Amen.



*Put you whole faith in God. He will
see that you want for nothing.
- Catherine McAuley*