

Sisters of St. Francis

o f M a r y I m m a c u l a t e

In the midst of a dark and quiet winter's night, our beloved Sister Verene Alvina Girmscheid, followed the heavenly star that would lead her home to God. Born on January 6, 1935, she became the very best gift that her parents Theresa (Marx) and Robert Girmscheid could offer to the Christ Child. In the company of kings and camels, a true Franciscan witness to the joyful mystery of the Incarnation, Verene's earthly life began on the feast of the Epiphany, and eighty-eight years later, came to completion within its octave on January 11, 2023.

The second oldest of seven children, Verene was a loving daughter and a devoted sibling to her three brothers and three sisters. With the family's move from rural Wisconsin to the southside of Chicago, Verene had the opportunity to receive a Catholic education where the awakening of a religious vocation occurred at an early age. During the Summer of 1948, as a kind, serious, pious, hard-working and intelligent thirteen-year old, character traits that would follow her through life, Verene successfully persuaded her parents that entering the aspirancy of the Joliet Franciscans was a very good idea. She was convinced of the call from which she never wavered over the course of the next seventy-five years.

Becoming a postulant on September 4, 1951, Verene was among the youngest in her class, yet quite experienced in the ways and customs of the community. Upon her reception into the Novitiate on August 12, 1952, she was given the name, Sr. M. Robert Ann. Professing her first vows on August 12, 1954, she was missioned to teach third grade at St. Joseph School in Freeport, Illinois. Over the course of the next few years, she multi-tasked as an elementary school teacher and an organist in parishes in Ohio and Illinois. Professing her final vows in 1957, and while completing her undergraduate degree from the College of St. Francis, she served as a school principal as well as a local superior. Much to Sr. Robert Ann's surprise, in August of 1965, at the age 31, she was appointed director of high school-aged aspirants at St. Francis Preparatory, and, multi-tasking yet again, served as a faculty member and guidance counselor at St. Francis Academy as well.

In the aftermath of Vatican II, and the turbulent years of renewal that followed, Sr. Verene's willingness to take on the ministry of initial formation in times of great uncertainty resulted in her appointment as Novice Mistress, her participation in a program for Formation Directors at the Aquinas Institute of Theology, and later, her appointment as Director of Formation. Upon completing eleven years in formation ministry as well as a Master of Education degree in counseling at Loyola University, new possibilities appeared on the horizon.

During 1976-1977, Sr. Verene engaged in graduate coursework in counseling psychology and spiritual development at the Institute for Spiritual Leadership at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago. Given her background, she was welcomed, along with other Joliet Franciscans, to serve as a rector of a women's residence

Alleluia!



Sister Verene Girmscheid, OSF

hall (Badin) at the University of Notre Dame, where she also worked in Student Services and as an adjunct instructor in ministerial formation. After four years, she returned to Chicago and became director of campus ministry at Chicago State University. There she accompanied first generation inner-city college students and also served for a brief time as a pastoral associate at Annunciata Parish.

In 1984, during the Congregation's General Chapter, Sr. Verene was elected to the office of Councilor-Coordinator. In 1988, after completing her term, she returned to Chicago and became a staff member, instructor and spiritual director at Institute for Spiritual Leadership, positions that she held until her retirement in June of 2005. During the years that followed, she continued in the ministries of pastoral care and spiritual direction in Hammond, Indiana, and later, in Joliet and at Our Lady of Angels.

In 2012, Sr. Verene recognized that Alzheimer's disease had become a part of the unfolding mystery of her life. With the grace of God in whom she trusted, she shouldered the heavy weight of a reality that she could not change. Ever grateful for the loving support and dedication of her treasured friend and longtime housemate, Associate Ann O'Brien, as well as the care and concern of countless Sisters, Associates, family members and friends, Sr. Verene lived out her final years blessed by those whom she loved so dearly.

For those who knew and loved Sr. Verene, the unforgettable memory of her raised eye brow, playful smile, and gentle chuckle will endure for years to come as will these words of her own wisdom that she imparts to us today: *"Our individual journeys take different turns in the road. The important question is whether we are truly living out WHO we are, and whether we are willing to continue the search for WHO we are called to become and WHATEVER that will lead to. This involves questions; this means searching. The journey goes on and the search continues."*

Thank you, Sr. Verene, for reassuring us in our searching as we follow the Star that leads us to Emmanuel, God-with-Us. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Sister Verene Girmscheid, OSF

January 6, 1935—January 11, 2023

<i>Born:</i>	January 6, 1935
<i>Parents:</i>	Robert Girmscheid and Theresa Marx Girmscheid
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 4, 1951
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 12, 1952
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1954
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 13, 1957
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	January 11, 2023

Ministry History

1954-1957	Teacher: Grades 3 and 4, St. Joseph, Freeport, Illinois
1957-1961	Teacher/Organist: Grades 5, 7, 8, St. Michael, Worthington, Ohio
1961-1963	Teacher/Organist: Grade 8, Mary Magdalen, Columbus, Ohio
1965-1970	Novitiate Mistress: St. Francis Convent, Joliet, Illinois
1970-1972	Student: Aquinas Institute of Technology, Dubuque, Iowa
1972-1973	Director of Formation: St. Francis Convent, Joliet
1973-1976	Director of Formation/Director of Novices: Center House, Joliet
1976-1977	Student Counsel: Institute for Spiritual Leadership, Chicago, Illinois
1977-1979	Rector-Badin Hall: University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana
1979-1980	Rector/Adjunct: University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame
1980-1981	Adjunct/Consultant to Student Affairs: University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame
1981-1982	Director of Campus Ministry: Chicago State University, Chicago, Illinois
1982-1983	Campus Minister: Chicago State University, Chicago
1983-1984	Associate Pastor: Annunciata, Chicago
1984-1988	Area Coordinator/Councilor: Motherhouse, Joliet
1988-1989	Staff Intern: Institute for Spiritual Leadership, Chicago
1989-1990	Spiritual Director: Institute for Spiritual Leadership, Chicago
1994-2004	Instructor/Spiritual Director: Institute for Spiritual Leadership, Chicago
2004-2005	Staff Member: Institute for Spiritual Leadership, Chicago
2005-2012	Pastoral Care: Home and Our Lady of Angels
2012-2019	Community Service: Our Lady of Angels
2019-2022	Ministry of Prayer and Presence: Our Lady of Angels

<i>Interment:</i>	Section 8, Lot 345, Grave 8 Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	Her parents, Robert Girmscheid and Theresa Marx Girmscheid, her sisters Theresa Girmscheid and Mardell Druzik
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her brothers Robert, Lew and Lambert Girmscheid and sister Geri Draus

Rest in Peace, Sister Verene!