

# *Sisters of St. Francis*

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

On April 24, 2023, after a short time in hospice care, Sister Laura Filipas died quickly, peacefully, and unexpectedly. After 88 years of loving her family and then her religious community, she passes on that legacy of love to all of us. Some years ago, in creating a document that might be called a spiritual will, Sister Laura wrote, "I am a teacher to the marrow of my bones because I love to learn and share, but intellect and knowledge without love and understanding is nothing. Any success I may have achieved, any good I may have done for others, was inspired by my familial and Franciscan ancestors. This is the love I leave, to live on in you who read these words."

On May 28, 1934, Laura Ann Filipas was born in Chicago to Croatian parents, Pearl (Bogdanic) and John J. Filipas, both of whom had been born in Austria. She was their youngest child and was welcomed into a family of three brothers and one sister. They were raised in Sacred Heart-Englewood parish in Chicago. At her 25<sup>th</sup> Jubilee, Sister Laura described her entry into the Joliet Congregation as a kind of home and Community affair. She recalled with amusement driving herself, her mother, and Sisters Francella and Celestine to Joliet the day she entered. Her companions then had to wait for a return trip to Chicago until her brother, after work, could travel to Joliet by bus to chauffeur them home.

Receiving the name Sister Claude, she grew close to her classmates. Her novice mistress, Sister Solana, in 1953, described Sister Claude's character as "pleasant and wholesome personality, open and sincere, considerate of others, charitable, responsible, outspoken, independent at times, a very capable student." Later, Sister Claude would describe her classmates as being very close-knit in the postulancy and novitiate. She said, "Just before First Profession we said among ourselves, 'Eighteen or nothing!'" then one novice left and Sister Claude had to reassess, so she decided "One or nothing!" because if everyone else left, she was certain she was called to be a Joliet Franciscan.

Sister Laura (the baptismal name she returned to after the Second Vatican Council) felt and expressed gratitude for the closeness and support of classmates and Franciscan friends while they grew and changed according to Vatican II insights. In 1997, she said, "Whatever good has been done in the various ministries I have experienced has been done as a Joliet Franciscan...a spirit that has carried me through since the day I realized I needed to stay."

Those ministries included teaching, prayer, spiritual

# *Alleluia!*



*Sister Laura Filipas, OSF*

direction, administration, and pastoral work. Her first fifteen years were spent in elementary and secondary education. From teaching in primary grades in Illinois, she went on to teach English in Illinois and Ohio high schools. As high school principal, she had the sad responsibility of closing St. Mary's in Columbus.

After her ministry in schools, Sister Laura answered the call to be a founding member of the Congregation's House of Prayer. She spent ten years at this House on the Kankakee River, praying, reading, studying the Bible, communing with nature, and welcoming people from the area who came for spiritual direction and renewal. In 1974, she evaluated that ministry saying that it was a good time of service for her because the nature of such a life emphasized prayer and close community living. The time for reflection helped her feel more competent when others approached seeking help.

Answering another call, Sister Laura agreed to return to Joliet to spend four years as a co-administrator at the Motherhouse. She said that experience increased her gratitude and admiration for our senior Sisters. While ministering there, she also stayed tuned to issues concerning the world and the Church. Two letters, addressed to an archbishop and a cardinal in the spring of 1983, are a testimony to this. She expressed her stand for non-violence when she commended Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago for his interview discussing the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace, and she prodded both him and Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee to continue research regarding the role of women in the Church. Her letters were passionate and respectful. Sister Kathleen Rossman, her Coordinator at the time, wrote in Sister Laura's file, "I think this speaks to who she is and I'm proud of her."

# *Sister Laura Filipas, OSF*

*May 28, 1934—April 24, 2023*

After 1983, Sister Laura moved on to parish work and spent many years directing, teaching, and forming adults. She taught classes, scheduled speakers, guided scripture study, facilitated a program for alienated Catholics who wanted to come home, held convocations with other parishes and met one-on-one with many parishioners. At the time of her 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee in 2004, Sister Laura described teaching as a life-long joy. "I learn so much from my students," she said. "That's the delight of teaching: one is constantly learning too."

When Sister Laura had the opportunity to go to Assisi in

1980, she came home with some new understandings of St. Francis and St. Clare. Those understandings came to be reflected in her own life: respect for the uniqueness of each individual, encouragement of others, awareness that conversion is an on-going process, courage in living convictions in the face of opposition, and concern for the poor. As she highlighted these in her "log," she showed us again who she is.

We bless you on your way, dear wise and witty, gentle and kind Sister Laura. Thank you for your legacy of love.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

---

<i>Born:</i>	May 28, 1934
<i>Parents:</i>	John J. Filipas and Pearl Bogdanic
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 4, 1951
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 13, 1955
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1954
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 13, 1957
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	April 24, 2023

---

## **Ministry History**

1954-1955	Teacher: Grades 4 and 5, St. Ann, Lansing, Illinois
1955-1960	Teacher: Grades 6, 7 and 8, St. Raymond Cathedral, Joliet, Illinois
1960-1962	Teacher: Freshman Homeroom, English, Religion, Guidance, St. Francis de Sales, Chicago, Illinois
1962-1964	Teacher: Civics, English, Religion, Creative Writing, Student Council, Senior Activity Moderator, Senior Homeroom, Activity Moderator, Student Council Advisor, Senior Activities
1964-1966	Teacher: English, CSMC, Bishop Ready High School, Columbus, Ohio
1966-1968	Principal/Teacher: Religion, English, St. Mary High School, Columbus, Ohio
1968-1969	Teacher: English, St. Francis Academy, Joliet
1969-1979	Core Member: House of Prayer, Kankakee, Illinois
1979-1983	Co-Administrator: Motherhouse, Joliet
1983-1984	Secretary: Society of the Little Flower, Darien, Illinois
1984-1990	Pastoral Associate: SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Naperville, Illinois
1990-1998	Director of Adult Education: SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Naperville
1998-1999	Sabbatical: Aurora, Illinois
1999-2009	Director of Adult Formation: St. Patrick Parish, St. Charles, Illinois
2009-2010	Teacher: ESL, Sanchez School, Joliet
2010-2019	Community Service: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet
2019-2023	Prayer Ministry

---

<i>Interment:</i>	Section 8, Lot 342, Grave 3, Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	Her parents, John J. Filipas and Pearl Bogdanic, her brothers, John Filipas, Peter Filipas, Michael (Mark) Filipas and her sister, Antoinette (Filipas) Eck.
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her nieces, grand nieces, nephews, many students and cherished friends.

*Rest in Peace, Sister Laura!*