



News Release

October 28, 2008

Benedictine Sister Mary Mercedes Kelemen Passes

CLYDE, Mo. - Benedictine Sister Mary Mercedes Kelemen, OSB, 92, passed away Oct. 27, 2008, at Our Lady of Rickenbach healthcare center in Clyde, Mo.

She was born Irene Marie Kelemen on Jan. 17, 1916, at her grandparents' home in Cleveland, Ohio. Her parents, Francis and Julia (Toth) Kelemen, and her grandparents were originally from Hungary. She was the oldest daughter of the family, and after the birth of her younger sister the family moved to Detroit where her father became a member of the Detroit Symphony. A few years later they moved to Los Angeles where her father played as a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. After one season he became homesick for the East, and the family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where her father played with the symphony and the opera.

Sister Mercedes attended Catholic schools in Ohio and California. When her father re-enlisted in the Naval Academy band and moved the family back to Annapolis, Md., she finished her education in public high school.

She began piano lessons at the age of 5 and started to study art at the Cincinnati Art Museum in seventh grade. When the family moved to New York she continued to study sculpture and drawing. She continued her art work until World War II when she had to discontinue and never took it up again. Later the family moved back to California where her parents owned a restaurant, and Sister Mercedes worked for them.

She was a woman of varied interests. An avid bicyclist, she biked about 10,000 miles before entering religious life. She collected stamps and dabbled in photography. She also served as sacristan for her church and attended Mass daily. In 1940, she joined the Women's Ambulance and Defense Corps of America and was a member for over four years. When the family sold the restaurant she felt free to follow her vocation.



Sister M. Mercedes Kelemen

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Sister Mercedes had contact with the Benedictine Sisters through their magazine and the correspondence department. She even made donations toward the construction of the Kansas City, Mo., monastery, which would later become her home.

She entered the Benedictine Sisters at the age of 33 on Dec. 7, 1949, and made her monastic profession of vows on Sept. 15, 1951, when she received the name Sister Mary Mercedes in honor of Our Lady of Mercy.

Except for a brief stay at Clyde to prepare for perpetual vows, she lived at the Kansas City community from 1954 until it closed in 1982. She also lived at the communities in San Diego and St. Louis until moving to Our Lady of Rickenbach in 2001. While a Benedictine Sister, she worked in the vestry, the craft shop, the kitchen and the altar bread department. In the Kansas City monastery, she had charge of the bells and the sound system and learned to play the classical guitar and the bass viol. Several sisters had the pleasure of listening to her play.

She enjoyed walking and other exercise and appreciated beauty, art, classical music and good books. More than anything she had a deep and abiding love for God and confidence in God's abiding love for her. It made her both perceptive and compassionate.

A Mass of Christian Burial will take place Wednesday, Oct. 29, in the Adoration Chapel, Clyde, followed by burial in Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Clyde.

Memorials can be sent in care of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, Mo. 64432-8100.



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