

Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look



Mt. Carmel's Sister of Mercy

She works quietly without fanfare. She preaches the message of Jesus' love loudly, but with few words. During the course of a day, she may have entertained and comforted both a bishop and a destitute street person with the same degree of skill and compassion. She accepts all people, regardless of social status; unimpressed by wealth or office, she quietly and patiently does her work each day. Last year she celebrated her 50th anniversary as a Sister of Mercy. She has spent the last 23 of those years working in the district surrounding Mt. Carmel Parish, an area considered by many to be one of Rochester's poorest.

What makes Sister Regis Straughn so great are the little things she does for people and for God. She sells used clothing at her center for the poor. She visits hospital patients who have no one to visit them. She distributes food and diapers to young mothers. She counsels the hungry and the lonely who may ostensibly come to her door looking only for food. And she is famous for providing support to Mt. Carmel's parish staff, particularly to the litany of priests who have been assigned to the parish throughout the years.

"She always has time for the now," says her longtime friend, Sister Agnes Theresa, parish visitor at St. Louis Church in Pitts-

ford. No matter how busy Sister Regis is, she always seems to have time to talk and listen, Sister Agnes Theresa explains.

Sister Maurice Pearson, teacher at Cardinal Mooney High School who has also been a friend of Sister Regis' for many years, agrees. She recalls that when she, Sister Regis and Sister Agnes Theresa were all stationed together at St. John's Parish in Clyde, Sister Regis was superior of the convent, principal and teacher at the grammar school, and dispenser of clothing to the poor. Sister Regis still had time to bake pies for sisters on their feast days. And she was a great baker to boot.

Except for a brother, Sister Regis has no living relatives. Perhaps because of that, she shows special compassion for those in the neighborhood who are sick or in trouble and, like her, have few or no relatives. These needy people often consider Sister Regis their only friend.

Last year, for example, a neighborhood man was mistakenly arrested. With no one to turn to, he gave the police Sister Regis' name. Through her intervention with the judge, the man was exonerated.

Even though Sister Regis seems to meet the criteria for holiness, she is also a practical Christian. When an obviously intoxicated man recently showed up at the convent door

asking for money, Sister took a quick look at him and asked him if he intended to use the money for alcohol. When he denied that he would, Sister then asked him to explain the bottle-like bulge under his coat. When he could not, Sister Regis left, returning with sandwiches instead of cash.

Not surprisingly, Sister Regis' love of helping people has roots that extend back to the days of her youth in the Humboldt Street area of Rochester. It was there she first met and became friends with Sister Agnes, whose family purchased the Straughn homestead.

Sister Agnes recalls: "I remember the first day I got off the streetcar, the day after we moved. I was just a young person then, although slightly older than Regis, but there was Sister Regis ready to walk me home so that I wouldn't get lost."

When asked to characterize Sister Regis, Sister Agnes said simply, "In all things Regis was trusting. And she never wanted to burden you. 'Oh no I'll do it,' she would say. But she wouldn't get upset, that's the thing."

Sister Regis' trusting character obviously stems from a deep faith in God. After helping those who come to her — no matter how bad their circumstances — Sister Regis always tells them: "Just trust in the Lord, and He'll take care of things."

"The Lord himself wouldn't dare not see her through; she has so much trust in Him," adds Sister Maurice, who explains that Sister Regis' deep faith in God simply permeates everything she does and all that she is.

For Sister Regis, that remarkable faith translates into helping the poor in the Mt. Carmel area and living a life of simplicity. When pressed to comment on the fact that inequities in the system cause so many people

in her area to live without necessities, she merely gives quiet assent and returns to her work.

She once remarked to Sister Maurice that she couldn't bear to look upon the poor and those in need. "I get so upset when I see these sad faces," Sister Regis had said.

In so many ways, Sister Regis embodies the spirit of her community, the Sisters of Mercy and their foundress, Mother Catherine McAuley. Gentleness, patience, compassion for the poor, prayerfulness and mercy are Sister Regis' gifts and those of her religious community.

Mother McAuley, on the other hand, is widely remembered for founding the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland in 1831 out of a simple desire to cut through red tape and help the needy women who came to her.

Sister Regis is the same way. In fact, even her inclination toward social work and social ministry mirrors the initial zeal and involvement of her foundress. Sister Regis is also unofficially credited with being the first member of her community to work full time in the area of social ministry, at a time when most sisters were still teaching.

Recovering from minor surgery recently, Sister Regis spent a few days at the mother-house' infirmary, where I visited her. As I left, I turned at the doorway of her room and looked back. She seemed so alone there all by herself in that big room.

"Are you lonely, Regis?" I asked her. "Oh no," she said, "I'm not lonely a bit." Out in the hallway, I reflected afterward. Of course she's not lonely, I thought; she's communing with the Lord. And she was, this remarkable woman of God, this Sister of Mercy.

Obituary

Johanna R. Miceli at 94; civic activist, teacher

Johanna R. Miceli, a resident of St. Ann's Home, Rochester, for 15 years, died Saturday, May 17, at the age of 94. A Mass in her honor was celebrated at the home on May 28.

Miss Miceli was born in Menfi, Sicily, near the Mediterranean Sea. Arriving in America at the age of one, her family settled in a German section of Brooklyn. She received a bachelor of arts degree from Hunter College in 1915. She later did graduate work at the University of Rochester.

In 1916 Miss Miceli moved to Rochester and began her teaching career as a substitute. She taught at Number 15 School for one year; Number 3 School for 13 years; and then at Jefferson High School for nearly 25 years, retiring in 1955.

While at Jefferson High School, she organized the Florentine Society in order to get young people of Italian descent interested in their heritage and to foster a continuation of their education. Scholarships were provided through the efforts of the members of the Florentine Society.

During 1917 and 1918, she worked at Adler Brothers Clothing factory two nights

each week to teach English and citizenship to immigrants. From 1955 through 1959, she taught similar classes at the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union.

Miss Miceli participated in various fund-raising campaigns for relief work in this country and in Italy. During the war years, she sold war bonds and stamps, and put in countless hours at the American Red Cross. She also served as a member of the Office of Price Administration and Ration Board.

In 1945, Miss Miceli became executive secretary of the Committee on Italian Relief for Italy. Another important committee on which she served was the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Mutilated Children of Italy.

Miss Miceli also participated in the Lilac Festivals held annually in Highland Park and in the United Nations Programs at the Eastman Theater.

Her club affiliations included: president of the Italian Women's Civic Club from 1928 to 1940; D'Amicis Club, president and founder; Cosmopolitan Club of Rochester, first woman president; American Committee for

Italian Migration, officer and member; Rochester Orthoptic Center, member of the Board of Directors; Opera Theater of Rochester, member of the Advisory Council; Il Solco, president; the Memorial Art Gallery; the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences; the Women's Educational and Industrial Union; the Steering Committee of the Women's Human Relations Council of Rochester; Women's Committee of the Civic Music Association; the Catholic Women's Club; Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Music Playhouse; Secretary of the Committee of Public Education; and the Rochester Retired Teachers Association.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This obituary ran in the Courier-Journal issue of June 12. We are re-running it in its entirety to correct an error that arose from incomplete information provided to us and an erroneous assumption on the part of our staff. We regret the error.

Holy Sepulchre sets 70-specimen tree tour

Holy Sepulchre Cemetery on Lake Avenue in Rochester will present a tour on Sunday, June 22, from 1-4 p.m. The cemetery, founded by Bishop Bernard McQuaid in 1871, has some 70 varieties of trees that have been selected for the tour. Trees will be marked with signs listing their botanical and common names.

The public is invited to tour the cemetery with a guide or to take self-guided tours

following maps that show the specimen tree locations throughout the cemetery. Tours will begin at the North Gate House, located at the east gate of the cemetery. The historic A.J. Warner Chapel, built in 1871, will also be open for visitation.

For information on the tour, contact E. Robert Vogt, cemetery director at (716)458-4110.

Sisters of Mercy to host board meeting in Rochester

The annual meeting of the governing board of the Federation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas is being held in Rochester this year, with the local congregation serving as host. The governing board is comprised of the major superior and assis-

tant major superior of each of the 27 Mercy congregations in the United States and in Newfoundland, Canada. The meetings, which are not open to the public, will be held at Nazareth College from Friday, June 20, through Tuesday, June 24.

**Closing of
Novena and
Feast of
Our Lady
of
Perpetual Help**

Mass at 7:00 p.m.
June 27, 1986
O.L.P.H. Church
1089 Joseph Avenue
(near Norton)

Social Following
All Are Welcome

**TEACHERS
DIOCESAN ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS**

Needed at all levels
N-6 and Junior High

Religion Science Math
Social Studies English Reading
Vocal Music Art Foreign Language

If interested apply:
**Assistant Superintendent for Personnel
Diocese of Rochester
Department of General Education
1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, New York 14624
(716) 328-3210**

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

**EDWIN SULEWSKI
FUNERAL DIRECTOR**

Don't funerals cost too much?
The value of a funeral cannot be measured totally in economic terms. You must also consider social and emotional factors. In economic terms you pay for the service of trained, licensed people, on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Our staff works to assist you when your loved one dies. The cost of a funeral also pays for our comfortable building, special vehicles and a casket. More importantly, a funeral gives you an important opportunity to express your emotions and feelings about the deceased. Through a meaningful ceremony you can express your love and say good-bye. We cannot set a value on these factors but psychologists have noted they are very important for healthy living.

We purchase all forms of insurance to protect our family & assets, not because we expect the worst to happen, but to be prepared. Doesn't it make sense then to prepare for what will happen. Let our trained counselors assist you with the many options available in planning for a worry-free future.

Burial Cremation Entombment

**SCHAUMAN-SULEWSKI
FUNERAL HOME**
2100 St. Paul St. 342-3400

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER PASTORAL CENTER

HOURS OF OPERATION
(Effective Monday, June 30, 1986)

Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CLOSED WEEKENDS, HOLIDAYS AND HOLY DAYS

(716) 328-3210