

Sister Mary Joachim Pearson, RSM, Elmira educator

Sister Mary Joachim Pearson, RSM, a teacher for nearly 50 years at Elmira Catholic High School and Notre Dame High School, died Friday, Aug. 18, 1989, while visiting at the Holy Cross Convent in Rochester. She was 79.



Sister Joachim died in her sleep of congestive heart failure, according to Sister Elaine Kolesnik, RSM. She lived at the Notre Dame Convent in Elmira.

Comments about Sister Joachim, a longtime resident of Elmira, focused on her sincere devotion to prayer, her family and her influence on the many diocesan students she came in contact with during more than 60 years of teaching.

"Sister Joachim was a competent and dedicated math teacher," said Sister Mary Walter Hickey, RSM. "From the very beginning, she gave her best to Notre Dame and will be greatly missed by her many friends."

In a prepared statement, the sisters at Notre Dame Convent called Sister Joachim "an institution as a math teacher ... in Elmira."

She was dedicated to her students, and they were loyally devoted to her," the statement said. "Wherever (Elmira) Catholic High or Notre Dame alumni are found, Sister Joachim's influence can be readily recognized. She was loved and revered by all who knew her."

Sister Joachim was an educator for more than six decades, teaching high school math and science for 49 years.

After beginning her teaching career with brief teaching stints at St. Thomas the Apostle and St. Andrew's schools in Rochester, Sister Joachim started her high school teaching career at Aquinas Institute. She taught math at the Dewey Avenue high school for nine years, before moving to Elmira and teaching math and science at the former Elmira Catholic High School from 1940-55.

She began teaching at Notre Dame when it opened in 1955, and remained there until 1988 while also serving as head of the math department.

For the past year, Sister Joachim, a Rochester native, had been tutoring and assisting in the principal's office at ND.

Among her other duties at Notre Dame over the years, Sister Joachim was active in many of the school's extracurricular ac-

tivities. She was the adviser to Notre Dame's National Honor Society, Math Club, junior and senior classes and Sodality — a now-defunct organization that encouraged spiritual growth and devotion to the Blessed Mother.

In addition to those duties, Sister Joachim also volunteered 32 years as a religious-education teacher for children attending public school in the Elmira area.

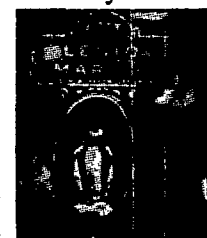
A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Tuesday, Aug. 22, in the chapel of the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse in Rochester. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Sister Joachim is survived by two sisters: Sister Mary Eugene, RSM, and Sister Mary Maurice, RSM; nieces and nephews; and several grandnieces and grandnephews.

Faith in action

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Members of the Legion of Mary take the word "apostolate" literally, based on the comments of Bernadine Begley, president of the the legion's diocesan comitium. The comitium is the governing body of the legion's four curia — Monroe, Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and Genesee — which encompass the diocese's 374 active legionnaires and its 8,000 auxiliary members.



The curia consist of several individual, parish-based groups. Active Legion of Mary members meet weekly to recite the rosary and discuss apostolic works with their pastors. Legionnaires often spend a few hours each week visiting home-bound Catholics, inviting new residents to join their local parishes, and calling up Catholics who no longer attend Mass.

Like the apostles, the legionnaires travel in pairs and are sometimes instrumental in dramatic conversions, according to Begley, who recalled helping a divorced Catholic come back to the church.

"He'd been divorced and remarried outside the church for many years," she said. The legion president befriended the man, and when his Protestant wife told Begley that her husband missed the church, "I gave the information to the pastor." After Begley set the wheels in motion, the couple obtained an annulment of the husband's first marriage, and Begley's late husband served as best man when the couple was married before the church.

"I thought, 'This is what heaven must be like,'" she exclaimed. "To think that we are the instrument!"

Two other societies — the Blue Army and the Nocturnal Adoration Society — also see themselves as instruments of God's reconciliation with a sinful world. Both emphasize structured prayer centered on devotional practices.

The Blue Army is dedicated to fulfilling the wishes of the Blessed Virgin Mary as reportedly given to the three children at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. Nothing less than the world's future rides on exact fulfillment of Mary's wishes, commented Dorothy Macaluso, diocesan secretary for the Blue Army.



"Our Lord said in the Bible that a nation that honors Him will be blessed," asserted Macaluso, who complained of pastors' indifference to the Fatima message. Pastors approached to further this message often say, "We're too busy. We do this, we do that," she reported.

Macaluso said Jesus' mother asked Catholics to hold weekly holy hours consisting of Benediction, recitation of the rosary, several prayers, and the consecration

of humanity to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Blue Army claims 3,000 diocesan members, she said, adding that the church needs more Catholic "soldiers." "It was Our Lady's promise that the amount of rosaries said would make a difference as to when (the conversion of Russia) would happen. It should have happened a few years ago," she said, noting, however, that the recent liberalization of Soviet life is a positive sign.

The obstacle created by alleged indifference to the Blue Army's goals is dwarfed by the threat ever-dwindling numbers pose for the Nocturnal Adoration Society. The society has a mailing list of 450 members, but only a handful show up for its monthly Saturday night vigils, according to Urban Kress, executive secretary of the society's diocesan branch.



Organized in Rochester in 1929, the Nocturnal Adoration Society meets in six centers throughout the diocese on various Saturday nights to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Each member spends one hour on his or her "shift" Kress said, noting that a minimum of three people is necessary to keep the adoration going.

Finding that minimum is increasingly

difficult, Kress said, adding that if the formerly all-male society hadn't admitted women about eight years ago, the society would have died. The society also has been forced to cut most of its adorations from eight to four hours, he noted, most often to accommodate increasingly older members.

"A lot of people are afraid to go out at night," Kress said, adding jokingly, "though no nocturnal member has ever been mugged."

Kress' humor masks a concern of all the traditional lay organization's leaders — the lack of new blood. Even the thriving Knights of Columbus have an average member age of 55, McHale said, attributing the group's "gray" factor to the way it often recruits new members. Most are recruited by friends, he said, and as the membership ages, so does the pool of prospective members.

Meleca blamed post-World War II affluence for the decline of membership in the Knights of St. John. "I think there was a decline in all the organizations," he said. "There was a lot of money around ... When you're poor, you seem to stick together."

Begley said that the Vatican II renewal of religious practices may have contributed to her organization's failure to recruit a large number of young people, many of whom, she said, were confused in the 1960s. "A lot of young people aren't religious," she

said, noting that television and other modern distractions may also be to blame.

Still, traditional groups can take comfort in the words of *Christifidelis Laici* which affirms that they have played — and continue to play — a vital role in the formation of Christians. Noting that the traditional societies must now exist alongside such newer groups as "Christian communities" and "movements," the pope's exhortation praises the variety and commitment of all lay organizations:

"However, they all come together ... in a common purpose, that is, the responsible participation of all of them in the church's mission of carrying forth the Gospel of Christ, the source of hope for humanity and the renewal of society."

Retrouvaille program set for couples seeking help

The next Retrouvaille program in the Rochester diocese is scheduled for the weekend of Sept. 15-17, at the East Avenue Inn, Rochester.

Retrouvaille is a program offered for couples who are experiencing difficulties in their marriages.

The program is Catholic, but is open to couples of all faiths.

Call 716/621-2901 for information.

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