

# Sister Mary Bride Claire, RSM, former superior general

Sister Mary Bride Claire, who led the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester through a crucial period of renewal in the 1960s, died of a heart attack on Monday, Oct. 9, 1989, at Highland Hospital. She was 78 years old.



Known as a charismatic leader, Sister Bride's courage and wisdom laid the modern foundations of the sisters' service in accord with the vision of the Second Vatican Council, said Sister Elaine Kolesnik, a congregational spokeswoman.

Under Sister Bride's leadership, the Sisters of Mercy sent seven women religious into full-time, inner-city service and dozens of others into part-time or summer programs, among them a store-front apostolate on Joseph Avenue in 1965.

"Sister Bride was the most inspiring leader of the Sisters of Mercy over the last 40 years," said Sister Mary Sullivan, a professor of language and literature at Rochester Institute of Technology who knew Sister Bride for 40 years. "Into every enduring organization there comes — at least once in a half century — a truly great and beloved person whom everyone cherishes and respects."

Last June, Sister Bride was one of eight Catholic women honored by the Women's Scholarship Committee of St. Bernard's Institute, for outstanding contributions to the Christian community.

Born in County Clare, Ireland, Sister

Bride came to Rochester as a young girl, attended the Rochester Business Institute and worked as a secretary before joining the Sisters of Mercy in 1933 at the age of 22.

In 1943, she received a bachelor of science degree from Nazareth College, where she majored in secretarial science. Sister Bride obtained her master of science degree — with a major in guidance and counseling — from the University of Dayton, Ohio, in 1973.

After teaching in the business department at Our Lady of Mercy High School from 1937 to 1949, she was appointed to head the congregation's formation program, guiding the development of all sisters not yet committed to perpetual vows — specifically, the development of novices.

In 1955, Sister Bride was elected assistant to the superior general. She was elected superior general in 1961, holding the office until she retired for health reasons in August, 1970.

During her tenure, she spent several weeks in Mexico and she was responsible for establishing the order's first foreign mission abroad, in Santiago, Chile.

In December, 1965, the entire congregation — led by Sister Bride — donned for the first time a modern habit. Two years later, she led 45 women religious in a two-year study of every aspect of the Mercy sisters' lives with a view toward the renewal called forth by the Second Vatican Council.

"(Sister Bride) was a special leader for

us as Sisters of Mercy of Rochester. She was a charismatic, gifted woman who led and directed us through the difficult years of renewal in the mid-60s," said Sister Mary Judith Heberle, who is presently a member of the sisters' leadership team. Sister Heberle served as assistant superior general to Sister Bride before succeeding her as superior general in 1970.

"She was open to changes in the church, and was willing to take risks if she felt this was for the best," Sister Heberle added. "She encouraged members of the congregation to be open to the directives of Vatican II."

Sister Bride served as a guidance counselor at Mercy from 1970 to 1977. She later became coordinator of the Omega Sisters

Community at the motherhouse from 1977 to 1979. During that time, she was also coordinator of services for retired sisters.

From 1979 to 1984, she was on the staff of the Mercy Prayer Center, which was formerly located at Holy Cross convent, Charlotte, and is now located on Highland Avenue in Rochester.

Sister Bride is survived by two sisters, Sarah (Ford) of Rochester, and Barbara (Connole) of Ireland; a niece, Barbara Pope of Rochester; a nephew, Michael Ford of Churchville; and several other nieces and nephews in Ireland.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held Wednesday, Oct. 11, in the motherhouse chapel. Interment took place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

## Building

Continued from page 20

only one to miscalculate in these areas. Many other dioceses, many a Catholic institution likewise overspent, were no more aware than we were of the radical changes that the future had in store.

We must not forget, however, the positive achievements of the era of "big spending." The period produced a number of worthy church buildings, some of them truly distinguished. It brought forth acts of great generosity towards the church, a largess surely noted in heaven. It gave a permanent impetus to the development of Catholic secondary and college education

in the 12 diocesan counties. And at least for a decade or two, it allowed more children than ever before to be educated in our diocesan elementary schools.

The saddest development in more recent years has of course been the decline of the diocesan parochial school system that Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid fought so valiantly and well to establish. That can never be completely restored to its old state. But many of the parish schools still survive.

Standard wisdom states that if you have a good thing going, you should not abandon it: Once forsaken, it can hardly ever be revived. Plans are now afoot to preserve what remains of our parochial school system.

# CLASSIFIEDS

## General

**Card of thanks 2**  
THANKS: St. Jude, God, thanks for favors received and for favors to come for me. R.S.

## Announcements 7

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