

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sister Louisita Dietrich, SSND
Educator, Artist



Waterdown, Ontario - Sister Louisita Dietrich died on February 6, 2017 at Notre Dame Convent, Waterdown. She was 87 and in the 68th year as a School Sister of Notre Dame.

Theresa was born on February 2, 1930 in a rural area near St. Clements, Ontario, the youngest child to a family already numbering eleven. Theresa attended a one-room separate school with secular teachers. Due to her mother's illness, Theresa was unable to continue her studies beyond eighth grade, a disappointment for her because she was eager to become a sister. Often, she would try to study from her older sister's books. Being the youngest in the family, she worked side by side with her father, especially when no hired help was available for farm work.

Theresa knew very little about sisters and only saw them when attending classes for first Communion and Confirmation. In 1944 Theresa witnessed a Reception Ceremony at Notre Dame Convent in Waterdown which confirmed her decision to become a religious. In September 1946, she entered the candidature and continued her education. In July 1948, she was received as Novice Mary Louisita and professed her vows the following year.

After graduating from Hamilton Teachers' College, Sister Louisita taught at St. Anne School, Port Dalhousie and St. Mary School, Oakville. In 1966, due to an illness she had to discontinue teaching. Sister Louisita's limitations did not prevent her from developing new skills, however. She took several computer courses and attended seminars to attain teacher certification in ceramics, pottery and stonework. With the kiln and potter's wheel she created a variety of art pieces and filled orders for personalized wedding gifts and ceramic Christmas trees with electric lights. She created madonnas for the Handicapped Guild and designed mugs and in 1977, designed plates for 50th anniversary of Notre Dame Convent. When she no longer had the strength to continue with pottery, she knit lovely baby clothes which she gave to poor families.

Sister Louisita also became a member of Catholic Union of Sick in America. Persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses were eligible for membership. She was conscientious in letter writing and phoning, offering hope and encouragement to the members. In October 1990, she was asked to represent CUSA at a national conference in Belleville, Ill. In spite of her illness, Sister Louisita was always pleasant and cheerful. She wrote, "Accepting one's disability means learning to live with it. Therein lies the key to empowerment, turning the disability into a ministry – to and for others."

From 1991-2001 Sister Louisita was sacristan for the motherhouse chapel - no small task, considering that the local parishioners came for Sunday liturgy while their new church was being built. She was also the main receptionist for several years and trained students who worked on weekends.

Sister Louisita's surviving sisters, Frieda Cole, Bernice Koebel and Eileen Cox came to visit her the afternoon of February 6. They were surprised that she could no longer communicate with them since she talked to one of them the previous evening. They considered being with her as a as she breathed her last breath great blessing.

On February 13, Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Louisita was concelebrated by Rev. Pablito Labado, chaplain, and Msgr Edward Sheridan. Her sisters and many nieces and nephews attended the Ritual of Remembrance and her funeral liturgy.