

Eulogy

I have a love-hate relationship with crossword puzzles. I love them when I solve them; and hate them when I don't. Maybe you can help me with my next challenge: a 9 letter name that means its mission ... How about:

C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-A > CHRISTINA: *A Bearer of Christ.*

Sr. Christina, lover of crossword puzzles and proud native of Rosebank, Staten Island was born as our country was sliding rapidly into the "Great Depression". Together with her sister Madeline and her brothers Joseph and John, she grew up in the loving environment of her family and of her faith - proud to be from St. Sylvester's Parish and elementary school.

The experience of Catholic traditions deepened as Sr Christina met the Sisters of St. John the Baptist at St John Villa Academy HS. Like a crossword puzzle in progress, seeds were planted that burrowed deep into her soul, took root and would blossom in years still to come.

After her HS graduation Sr Christina entered the business world. Through her simple acts of kindness and her gentle humor, she brought Christ to her colleagues in the workplace. But amid clicking typewriters and ringing phones she heard God's call inviting her to follow, to love, to serve. She responded by joining the community of the Sisters of St John the Baptist.

Although preparing to become a Sister is a serious undertaking, Sr Christina continued to hone the humor that had helped her deal with loss and struggles. Safe to say there are few of us who, having known Sr Christina, don't automatically answer her question: "*If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring? Pilgrims.*" !

But God has a sense of humor, too. Sister's Profession of Vows took place in March 1955. In June 1955 Sr Christina was on her way to Santiago Chile where she brought Christ to His little ones in the classroom. She didn't know a word of Spanish, but she knew the universal language of a smile, a hug, a wiped away tear.

After 6 years Sister returned to the States eager to be “back home”. For Sister, home had to be “where your heart is”, because where Sister’s house was, it wasn’t any longer. Every driver who ever chauffeured Sister knows that even 55 years later, she would jokingly request a moment of silence as we whizzed through her living room - now the Staten Island Expressway!

In the years that followed, Sr Christina - as a teacher, a principal, a secretary, a local Superior - brought an understanding Christ to all whom she encountered. In 1975 she returned to her Alma Mater, St John Villa Academy HS. For the next 38 years she brought a loving and compassionate Christ to her colleagues and to her students as she taught them the skills of business and Christian living.

When news of Sister’s death was posted on Facebook, there were more than 90 responses in less than 24 hours. Perhaps Sister’s life-long impact on her students is best heard in the voices of her former students.:

* “Sr. Christina was such a gentle soul and was always pleasant to be with. She gave such an example of dedication to her students and community.”

* “Sr. Christina just about saved my life. I arrived at the Villa an angry, lost person and Sr. Christina both listened to me and advised me, putting me on the right track, She gave me hope.”

* “Sr. Christina was kind. She had a passion for her students and through them, her memory will live on.”

* “It was a blessing to have known Sr. Christina. Love just shone through her.”

So now, we say thank-you and farewell to Sr Christina. The crossword puzzle of her life is completed. The last word has been entered: her “YES” to God to come home to eternal life.

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