

Heartbeats

**Servants of the
Holy Heart of Mary**

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Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary Celebrate 80 Years of Ministry in Rural Illinois

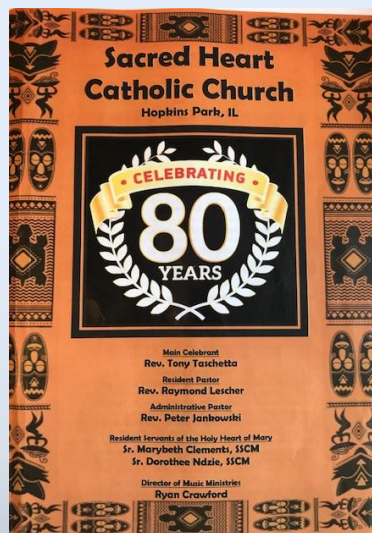
There once was a woman name Marie Gagnon who was born in the village of Beaverville, Illinois. At age 19 she made vows in the congregation of the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary, and was given the name Sister Mary Adelaide. As a noted educator, she shared knowledge and wisdom with those who were lucky enough to enter her classroom. But her missionary heart longed for more.

It was in the gentle hills of a rural area south of Momence, that she found the full



Sr. Mary Adelaide Gagnon

flowering of her discipleship. In Pembroke Township she found the largest Afro-American settlement north of the Mason-Dixon line. Families from Mississippi and Alabama, these folk were people of the Great Migration, the movement that led black people to emigrate to the cities of the north to find work. On their way, they found Pembroke Township and many purchased land for use as getaways, small farms and summer retreats. These were not wealthy people; simply, they were persons who sought a better life.



Sister Mary Adelaide, with the blessing of the pastor of St. Patrick's parish, Momence, became an evangelist of the love of God to this community. She followed God's call, and nothing was ever the same.



In 1939, a mission church was established. Sacred Heart Mission celebrated its 80th anniversary the weekend of September 28 – 29.



Saturday found participants enjoying a magnificent celebration including two gospel

choirs and a deacon who preached a revival message.



A sumptuous meal followed and the children, gathered under the direction of Sr. Bernadette Pabon, celebrated the Magnificat of Mary and a patriotic presentation.



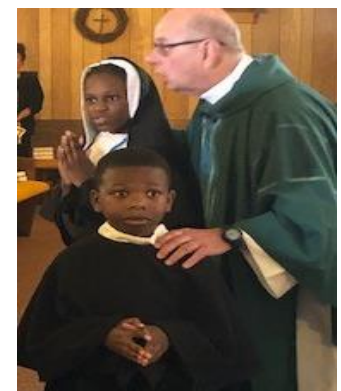
On Sunday, the congregation and

guests met for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Father Tony Taschetta, former pastor, was the main celebrant.



He recounted memories that became alive in our hearing. Today, the parishioners of Sacred Heart include persons of African, Hispanic and European descent. With a revived heart and spirit, the people of Sacred Heart parish proclaim fulness of life and faith.



*SSCMs in Hopkins Park
Sr. Carol Karnitsky, sscm
Occasion of the 80th Anniversary of Sacred Heart Mission*

How did you get here today? I don't mean your mode of transportation...I mean you with your unique story of life?

Have you ever seen the show "Finding your Roots" on PBS? In each episode famous people have their heritage tracked by a combination of DNA testing and genealogical search of records and documents. Most of us don't have the money to do this but I will try to do a little "finding your roots" regarding the unique story of women religious in Hopkins Park, IL.

Women religious, Catholic Sisters or, as we are also known, Nuns, are dedicated women, baptized in faith and consecrated to living their baptism by lives lived in community and for service. One of these women is one of the catalysts for this celebration. Marie Gagnon, known as Sister Mary Adelaide, was born and is buried just a few miles from here in Beaverville. Both her parents immigrated to this area from French-Canada. At age 19, Sister Mary Adelaide made her vows to God and she died a few months after the 50th anniversary of those vows. That was in March, 1962, a full year before Sister Mary Beth was born.

Mary Adelaide was a talented woman who was a great educator in the areas of math, chemistry, English as a second language, elementary education and even, if I read her file correctly, violin. Yet, her desire to share her love for Jesus extended beyond the classroom walls.

I quote from the homily given by the beloved Father Joseph Burns at her funeral, "If there was one work at which she labored more than others, one work that she loved more than others, it was her work For Sacred Heart Mission in Hopkins Park. Twenty-four years ago," Father Burns continued, "with Father Demarais, Sister began to visit this community. There, among the hills south of us, she saw much work to be done and she tried to do it."

“She saw those who were hungry, and she gave them to eat; she saw those who were thirsty, and she gave them to drink; she saw the naked, and she clothed them; she saw the sick and she cared for them; she saw the homeless, and she found them shelter. She took care of the physical needs of many—but she saw more than their physical needs—she saw they were spiritually hungry and thirsty and naked and tried to satisfy that hunger and thirst and nakedness with the truths of God. She saw people wandering and lost and she brought them into the house and family of God.”

Not only that...this gentle, loving, accepting, generous women opened the floodgate that led to many other Sisters, the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary, to spend their time and their love with the people of Pembroke. Not only the Servants, but also, Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame and Franciscan Sister of Mary Immaculate. Women religious have lived and served here for 80 years!

I do not want anyone here to think our presence among you is one sided – we are one people and you have ministered to us and with us for all these years. On your program you see a list of the women religious who have lived among you. Some have even come from as far away as Canada. With Sister Dorothee, the cycle has come full circle because her time here has been spent sharing the African heritage from which many citizens of this area have sprung.

As Leader of the SSCM Sisters, I have frequent communication with the Sisters. Often I see Sr. Mary Beth’s name come up on my phone. Very often she says, “I just wanted to share a ministry moment with you...I am so blessed being here.”

Over the years, many Sisters have been blessed by being with you. Let’s take a moment to treasure each of these women in our hearts, most particularly the Sisters who have touched you or your family.

The Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary make the commitment to the people of Hopkins Park/ Pembroke, that we will continue to be among you for however long our Heavenly Father gives us members. We continue to hear the call that Sister Adelaide first heard so many years ago.

Sr. Carol Karnitsky, sscm

Sister Mary Himens Celebrates 90 Years Young!



Sister Mary Himens had a delightful morning on Saturday, September 28th.

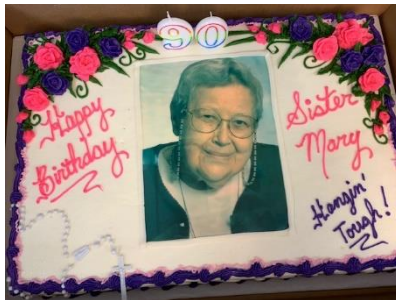


Several of the sisters joined her in the parlor at the Merkle-Knipprath Nursing Facility to converse and pray. Sister was delighted! Following the visit, everyone walked down to the cafeteria where the

residents gather for lunch at 11:00.



To Sister Mary's surprise, there was a large birthday cake and even a small, personal cake just for her! Her lunch table was decorated with a festive tablecloth which matched the plates and napkins that would be used for serving the cake.



As a surprise to Sister, her favorite saying was added to both of her cakes. She got a little chuckle when she saw her own words: "Hangin' tough" decorating the cakes! You

can be assured that any time you ask her how she is doing, she will always respond with "Hangin' tough."



The cakes were beautifully done at a local bakery in Bradley and knowing the cake was for a sister, they even used a small rosary as part of the decorations. Her sweet, smiling face was also transferred on to the cake.

The sisters and residents of Merkle-Knipprath joined in singing Happy Birthday to Sr. Mary. After lunch was over, the cake was cut and offered to all of the residents and staff.