

Sister Victorine Sitter: a Lifelong Impact on Her Students

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The hunger for God can only be satisfied by a love that is face to face, person to person. It is only in the eyes of another that we can find the icon of Christ. We must make the other person aware we love him. If we do, he will know that God loves him.

While thinking about how I could describe Sister Victorine Sitter's teaching vocation, I happened to read the above quotation by Catherine de Hueck Doherty. It captures how she affected those whom she taught.

Perhaps her most vital contribution has been her effect on the many first graders who were the focus of her work for decades. I spoke with two of them, and similar themes emerged from the conversation. She was a wonderful teacher, kind and patient with a sense of humor. Sister Claudia Cherro said, quite simply, "I adored her." As a student, Sister Claudia

wanted to be just like Sister Victorine, and her presence in the Community today speaks of the tenacity of that desire. She said that Sister Victorine has remained a good and loyal friend within Community.

Another person on whom Sister Victorine had a deep impact is Mark Croteau, the Director of Parish Mission at the Church of St. Joseph in West Saint Paul. He described Sister Victorine as "gentle and kind," someone "who made us feel comfortable." At a time when many Catholic schools, like Our Lady of Victory in Minneapolis, packed fifty students in first grade classrooms, Sister Victorine somehow managed to create a safe environment for learning. Mark never forgot her. His experience as a first grader plunged into a large school could have been overwhelming, but Sister Victorine's warmth and concern for her students allayed their fears, so that they could concentrate on mastering the important tasks of first grade. After many years, Mark and his family still keep in touch with Sister Victorine.



Mark Croteau, Sister Victorine Sitter, and Sister Claudia Cherro share memories.

After retiring from elementary school teaching, Sister Victorine moved to The College of St. Scholastica where she administered tests to students who needed a longer time for tests, a soothing environment, or other accommodations. On her bedroom wall is a framed document that reveals how her caring attitude had the same calming effect on college students as on first grade students. Asked what they liked about Sister Victorine, they replied that she is loving, calm, generous, kind, considerate, endearing, a sweetheart, adorable, sensitive, caring, inspirational, among other words.

Sister Victorine inspired them with her custom of starting each session with a prayer. That, by itself, had a calming effect. Of course, there was so much more in the way she responded to each student as an individual. She described the importance of the mentoring she had within the Community. She did her practice teaching with Sister Valeria Lessard and had Sister Benedicta Braegelman as a guide when she started teaching. The qualities they fostered were ones that she carried into all that she did. The seed had landed on good ground.