



In Memory of Sr. Margaret Blanch

~ *Reflection written by Sr. Lucinda May Patterson* ~

Birth: June 19, 1922 — Death: November 23, 2012
Entered our Congregation: August 11, 1947
First Profession: May 17, 1948 — Final Vows: August 29, 1953



What to say about **Sr. Margaret Blanch** or some of you may remember her as **Sr. Mary Giles**? What a humbling task. I met Sr. Margaret about 17 years ago. I did not have an opportunity to see Sr. Margaret as a young sister or hear how she was following her call from God as a Franciscan Sister of the Atonement.

Sr. Margaret taught me with her twinkling eyes and smiles. Words were not necessary. Walking into her room at the nursing home often was calming. A quiet, gentleness always filled the room. Sr. Margaret would light up with Sr. Joanne's boisterous presence. Sr. Joanne would tell her about comings and goings. Sr. Margaret listened intently.

One of Sr. Margaret's hands liked to curl up, and it was humbling to take this hand, massage it, lotion it, and gently get it straightened out for a little while. If hands could talk! I imagined how often Sr. Margaret probably did this as a licensed practical nurse. I sensed Sr. Margaret's hands had been very hard working. I imagined the care and comfort provided by them.

Sr. Margaret's smile was welcoming and if it is possible for a smile to love, her smile loved. It was something I missed with the progression of Alzheimer's.

Sometimes, we would take pudding, and it was wonderful to see it disappear. I understand Sr. Margaret loved something sweet. Maybe this is another word which could be used to describe Sr. Margaret. She was sweet. I never heard her say an "unkind word."

Our Secretary General, Sr. Denise sent me a page discovered in Archives at Graymoor written by Sr. Mary Gertrude (RIP), and Sr. Hope Marie on March 8, 2003. I am going to read it now. Following this, I am going to share what Sr. Joanne and I experienced on our final visit to see Sr. Margaret on November 23, 2012.



Sister Margaret Blanch's Story

On Friday, November 23, 2012, Sr. Margaret was on my mind. I knew I was going to be taking Sr. Joanne for banking business. We got off to a late start due to some matters I needed to take care of for Lurana Shelter. After getting some issues settled, we headed off to the banks.

I realized I had forgotten to ask Joanne if she wanted to go visit Sr. Margaret after the banking business was over. Energy levels are not always high on Friday, but it was a green light. The traffic was intense and it took quite a while just to reach St. Albert Trail.

We got to Youville Home and limped our way to Sr. Margaret's room. It was after 6:00pm. We greeted Sr. Margaret, prayed, pulled up two chairs and chatted away. Sr. Margaret's eyes were closed; her breathing labored. Sr. Joanne named family members waiting for her, and I asked Sr. Margaret to pray for a couple of special intentions.



Sr. Mary Gertrude Blanch and her sister, Sr. Margaret Blanch - 2002
Edmonton, AB, Canada

I told Sr. Margaret how lucky she was that we had forgotten to bring the words for "*Our Lady of the Atonement*." I told Sr. Margaret only God can love our very "off-key" voices. I really thought Sr. Margaret's eyes might open, because of Sr. Joanne's boisterous laugh. She had to hang on to her trachea cap.

I asked Sr. Joanne if she thought Margaret might like to hear Ave Maria. Sr. Joanne thought she might. I found a "YouTube version sung by Luciano Pavarotti." After the video buffered, I placed the phone close to Sr. Margaret's left ear and we quietly listened. Something amazing happened. At the end of the song, Sr. Margaret's entire expression changed. Her face relaxed, her breathing was gentler.