**Sr. Therese Marie Lucassen**

**Date of Birth: August 24, 1927**

**Entered Eternal Life: December 10, 2019**

**Eulogy by: Mary Lou Lafferty OSF**

On behalf of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, I want to welcome everyone to the Motherhouse for the funeral Liturgy for Sr. Therese Marie Lucassen. In particular, I want to welcome her three nieces Kathy, Therese and Christine, as well as her nephew, Edward and his wife, Marcella. I can hear Therese scolding me that I should be calling you “Dr. Edward Fitzpatrick”. She was so proud of Ed, but truly loved all 7 of her sister, Nora’s children. We welcome, also, Therese’s grandniece, Elena and grandnephew, Edward.

When I think of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany as a whole – from the day of origin until the acceptance of our newest member last September- I see a quilt with its myriad of squares…many completed and others in process. Each one of us has a square in that quilt and that square will come to its completion on the day that we draw our last breath here on earth. Needless to say, each square will be as different as each of us is in life.

Therese Marie’s first marking on her quilt square was on August 24, 1927, the day of her birth to her parents, Lucas and Helen Lucassen in the Bronx, NY. There were three girls in the family – Nora, Helen (known in religious life as Therese Marie) and Mary Louise. She always spoke lovingly of her sisters.

After graduating from Cathedral High in New York City, Therese worked for nine years at New York Bell as a telephone operator. On October 4, 1954, she entered the Congregation and began her journey. During the next 65 years, she lived the mission of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany and ministered in parish schools on the East Coast. Her ministry in education is a large part of her square for the FSA quilt. She was an educator par excellence as a principal and a middle school teacher.

I recall back in 2003 when Therese was asked to consider retirement and possibly find some volunteer work. I happened to be the one requesting that of her and it was not an easy task. She could not fathom her life without helping others. After our dialogue, she went to Martin House in Trenton, NJ and volunteered as an ESL teacher. Whatever Therese put her hands to, she succeeded in. There she provided hope and opportunity to many who had no hope, who believed they had no future. What she thought was an end for her became a whole new beginning and she stayed at it for 12 years. This experience will shine brightly in her square.

Having lived with Therese twice - first in Alexandria, VA and then Pennsauken, NJ - and interfacing with her over my years in Leadership, I found Therese to be a very prayerful woman. She was a faithful woman religious. That serenity and beauty which surrounded her provides the background for her piece in the FSA quilt.

Not everything was always calm and calculated. I wonder how many State Troopers she convinced that she didn’t see the speed zone sign as she was questioned. Yes, she did have a heavy foot, but that doesn’t deserve a place in her quilt square.

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Therese had a wonderful gift for crocheting and sewing. She was a natural and her creations were beautiful, just like her square is becoming.

When Therese came to Allegany four years ago, she was not happy. However, it didn’t take long for her to settle in and participate in all the activities and programs offered. It seemed as if she became a new person. She was relaxed, always happy and grateful for all that was hers. As is evident in the pictures in the lobby, Therese enjoyed life here in Allegany, especially celebrations.

About two years ago, she had a stroke which progressively affected her and, as we know, immobilized her. But we also know, she found her own way of communicating. She brought delight to the nursing staff, as she responded to their inquiries about many topics, especially her beloved Bronx and her mechanical dog, Huskie.

Last Sunday, it was evident that Therese was beginning to complete her “square of life” for the FSA quilt. As Frank Sinatra sang “I did it my way”, so did Therese! We no sooner began sitting vigil with Therese on Tuesday afternoon and within two hours, she returned to her God. Her leaving was like her life – quiet and peaceful. So Therese’s contribution to the FSA quilt was completed on December 10, 2019, at 4:24 PM.

Peace and blessings, Therese! May you have eternal rest!