**Sr. Frances Miritello**

**Date of Birth: November 3, 1943**

**Entered Eternal Life: December 22, 2019**

**From her eulogy by her nephew, Br. Louis Miritello**

Today, we celebrate the life of a Franciscan Sister of Allegany known to us by many names: Baptized, “Frances MaryAnn Miritello”, “Frances”, “Fran”, “Sister Carmel Ann”, “Sr. Frances Miritello”, and “Frannie”.

Once upon a time, there were two children if Italian immigrant families who grew up in Manhattan. Their families decided to migrate to “Long Island”, a former Dutch settlement called Brooklyn, then city. It came to be that, unknowingly, these families settled in adjacent neighborhoods. A certain elderly lady and match-maker, Chichina, by name, introduced the oldest boy of a Sicilian family of six with the oldest girl of a Neapolitan family of seven. It was thus, that Carmello Miritello and Anna Diorio met; were engaged; married; and raised two children, a boy named Louis, after his paternal grandfather and a girl named Frances Mary Ann, after her paternal grandmother, her maternal grandmother, and her mother. I mention all this because, if done improperly, it could have “rekindle the wars of the kingdoms of Italy”!

Having grown up as children of the depression our parents Anna and Carmine were used to a tight budget. They pinched pennies to save to buy an attached 1950s style house in Gravesend, Brooklyn, (with the help of two mortgages) that became a secure and loving home to us. Dad worked as a tech and frame installer for Western Electric, then a division of the Bell Telephone conglomerate. Mom was a stay at home mom. It was a home in which we liked to be, when not in school. We emulated a parental trait that if we used our brain and hands we should never want for anything. “If you can’t buy it, learn to build it”. We had a “genesis” philosophy and became fairly adept at a number of skills. Mom shared her tailoring and musical skills and dad shared his technical and building skills.

We attended SS. Simon and Jude Elementary School (tuition free} where the Sisters of St. Dominic laid a good spiritual and educational foundation which would prove to be a contributing factor to our vocations. The budget became even tighter as we grew and had to attend High School. I attended St. Francis Prep (which led to my vocation) and Frances went to St. Edmund’s, a Dominican Sisters’ high school. As I think back, our desire for community life was born in that home in Gravesend. Our parents’ presence us, was the foundation of community life. Having been attracted to the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn in St. Francis Prep, on graduation, I left home to start my formation. Frances told me that her vocation started when she accompanied my family to our monthly visiting days at our novitiate. Frances’ only angst was leaving our parents alone, since I had left them already. Yes, God and family made her who she was and her Sisters in community polished her adulthood.

Frances always led a simple life; never desired honors, or to be noticed. A college degree and Masters were just necessities of the life chosen. Fashion was not her forte. In her earlier days before and during her life, she was quite mechanically adept and actually would go to convents during the summer recess from school with her toolbox to fix things that needed repair, a trait inherited from dad. As a child, she went to dancing school, our mother’s fantasy but her abomination, She could sew, play the accordion, and keyboard, our mother’s talents.

She tended to have a special attraction for God’s little ones, I wonder why? Be it a child, plant, or animal. Thus, she enjoyed teaching the primary grades. When assigned to Blackwood, NJ, I think, she began to raise little fish. She would buy the feeders for a few cents. “I would take them home to give them a life”. When they grew too large for the tank she brought them back the pet shop who sold them as pets and he’d give her more little ones, I think he got the better deal. She performed minor underwater surgery on one little fish that got a pebble stuck in its mouth as she intervened with a tweezers to excise it, thus allowing the little one to breath and eat. She loved my two goldfish and probably has pictures of them all over her room. She even enjoyed it when we spoke on video phone they had learned her voice coming from the phone’s speaker and would come over to her picture on the phone when I faced it toward the tank. Oh, how she loved her little fish!

Frances and I, though geographically separated for most of our adult lives, were rather close. We thought alike; enjoyed the same things; lived the same life, the same Franciscan Rule, and communicated daily. Because of her location in South NJ, where my parents found an elderly home, she bore the burden of my mother’s care after my father had passed. After my mother’s passing we spent ten days in Rome and Assisi together on my 50th Jubilee gift money.

Frances was plagued by several chronic medical issues throughout her later life that required special care which she found here but despite the care, her body finally yielded to disease. You will miss her quiet, and sometimes not so quiet, presence! Yes, I will miss the nightly phone chats, and so will my fish.

I thank all of the sisters, both living and deceased, for accompanying my sister on her journey to God; nurturing her; and making her what she became – a bride of Christ. We bid farewell to our Frannie, there remains a vacuum in our lives, only to be filled with great memories.