



In Loving Memory of
**Sister Mary William
Verhoeven, CPS**

* 22.02.1945 † 25.06.2021

**The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want ...
You spread your table before me ...
My cup overflows. (Ps 23)**

Sr. Mary William (Laurentia, Laura) was the first Child of Theodora and William Verhoeven born in Asten in the Netherlands. In 1950, Sr Mary William's family with now 3 children emigrated to Canada where they established themselves on a farm in Wyoming, Ontario. In Canada, 5 more children were born into the Verhoeven family. Being the eldest of eight siblings, she learned to shoulder responsibility at a young age; and she continued to do so in a variety of different ways throughout her entire life.

When she was only five years old, Sr. Mary William already had a strong sense of her vocation. In her biography, she remembered telling her family, "I am going to be a Sister." Educated by the Sisters of St. Joseph, she was accustomed to those wonderful women; but God did not call her to join their congregation. Her heart was drawn to the distant lands of Africa and to the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood. So in 1963, she entered our Congregation at St. Bernard's Convent.

After her years of initial formation, Sr. Mary William made her Final Profession on February 2, 1969. In the same month she also completed her nurses' training at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Though medicine had always been her desire, she was ready to pursue her career in nursing, whether in Canada or in the missions. As chief nurse at the then St. Bernard's Rehabilitation Hospital, she lovingly nursed the many patients entrusted to her care.

It soon became clear that the God of surprises had other plans for her. At the age of thirty-five the responsibility of provincial leadership was laid upon her shoulders. This was one of many leadership hats she would wear over the years. From 1980 to 1990, she served as Provincial Superior of the Canadian Province, and after that as provincial assistant. She resumed her service as nurse at St. Bernard's Hospital, while also taking on the Administration of Queen of Peace Villa, our former retirement residence in Toronto. She moved to Queen of Peace as the local leader of our sisters' community there.

After only a short stay there, she was able to resume the Administration of Mariann Nursing Home which she had given up when becoming provincial the first time. So she moved to Richmond Hill and joined the sisters there at St. Francis Convent as their local leader.

Since 1983, she had also served as procurator for the Canadian Province, and since the year 2000 would continue doing so for both U.S.A. and Canada, the new North American Province. 2009, much to her surprise, Sr. Mary William was again asked to shoulder the responsibility as Provincial, this time of the entire North American Province.

Sr. Mary William also sat on various committees, among which are the *Pastoral Mission Fund* of the Archdiocese of Toronto, and the *Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario*. She continued to share her expertise with the boards of *Mariann Nursing Home* and *St. Bernard's Retirement Residence*.

Sr. Mary William was a knowledgeable and multi-talented woman but very unassuming. Twice, the superior general sent her on a special mission, first to Kenya when the Province of East Africa was constructing an infirmary for our senior Sisters. Three years ago, she was sent to the Philippines to help evaluate our new foundation there and from there visited Korea. At General Chapters or meetings of provincials, Sr. Mary William was often on the finance committee. She also helped Provincials from Africa with project applications, empowered and connected them to funding organizations, demonstrating her big heart for mission.

Always available and patient, Sr. Mary William was ever ready to help the student Sisters from other provinces and any Sister struggling with the challenges of computers. Then, of course, there were those lovely summer days when Sr. Mary William could be found swimming or paddling the canoe at our cottage. If you happened to spend time with her at the cottage, you would be treated to the delicious wholesome meals she cooked. After dinner, you might be challenged to a game of Scrabble, a game she often won.

Sister enjoyed reading and playing word games with her sisters. During her illness, when she had a good day, she would be out in the rockery garden tending to plants. In between she knitted hats and scarfs for the poor at Good Shepherd Refuge.

"Dear Sr. Mary William, the Scripture passage from Psalm 23 that you chose for your 50th Jubilee Celebration in 2016, perfectly expressed your firm belief and trust in God throughout the joys and sorrows of your life. 'The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want. You spread your table before me. My cup overflows.' After your long and difficult illness, which you carried with dignity, may the Lord, whom you loved and served so faithfully, welcome you now into His eternal embrace. We, your Sisters, hold you in great esteem and celebrate your life even as we mourn. We already feel the void you left. We thank you for being the pillar of strength, that you were for us in the North American Province and indeed in the entire Congregation, a valiant woman and a mentor.

This adapted quote from Proverbs 31:25-27 sums up who you are:

She was clothed with strength and dignity; she could laugh at the days to come.

She spoke with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness was on her tongue.

She watched over the affairs of her household and did not eat the bread of idleness.

Rest in eternal peace, dear Sr. Mary William, true Missionary Sister of the Precious Blood.

You blessed our lives in ways too numerous to count. We will be forever grateful.

Please look after us as you always did.

*Gone
but never
forgotten*