



## Sister Marie Gilligan, SC

Entered eternal life on November 24, 2023

Sister Marie Gilligan was born in her favorite city, Elizabeth. She attended St. Patrick's elementary and high school as did her five siblings: Lois, Kathleen, Joanne, James, and Richard. Marie always impressed others with her sparkling blue eyes, warm smile, sharp intellect, and quick, quiet wit. Most of her closest friends, now with God, knew her for almost 77 years of her religious life. They would all agree that Sister Marie was a deeply spiritual Sister of Charity who so competently filled the roles of daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, teacher, student, pastoral minister, preacher, social worker, retreat director and friend.

No matter where Marie was ministering, she always loved and supported her family of whom she was so proud. In the years we lived together, we enjoyed spending time with several of her family members listening to family stories. Marie would always make brownies whenever she went to visit them.

Marie said that she was strongly influenced by the Sisters of Charity during her school years and that after a year working in Civil Service, she decided to enter the Sisters of Charity. Marie taught in various schools for a total of 25 years: Our Lady of Sorrows, South Orange, St. Francis, Riviera Beach, FL, St. Stephens, Kearney, and St. Michael's, Jersey City.

For the following 26 years, from 1973-1999, Marie seemed to fulfill the mission she was born to live. On responding to the Holy Spirit, Marie accepted an invitation by Glenmary Home Missioners to minister to the rural poor, and to assist the first resident priest in St. Helen Church in Amory, Mississippi. Her work of social ministry included teaching adult basic education to homebound and isolated adults who had never learned to read. She assisted many families with basic needs, transportation, support services, and helped to have city water installed in a rural neighborhood.

Several of our sisters ministered with Marie in the parish or in nearby parishes, but when Sister Kathy Quigley arrived, she stayed with Marie for more than 20 years ministering in pastoral services and social services.

Marie had earned a master's degree in social ministry, and later, they each earned a Doctor of Ministry degree in Spirituality. They worked on many committees together. The people they served always found their way to their doorstep with an immediate response with a ride to the doctor, a word of counsel or financial assistance. Marie served on the Board of Advisors for a Community Action Agency. As part of the advisory council of the Department of Human Services she worked with Headstart to obtain transportation for the area children. She was also involved in the groundwork for a new Headstart Center in Smithville, Mississippi. In addition, she was President and Treasurer of the Amory Ministerial Association and volunteered as a hospital and hospice chaplain at Gilmore Memorial Hospital.

From 1993 to 1999, Sister Marie was the resident pastoral minister of St. Helen Catholic Church in Amory, Mississippi. She was responsible for the pastoral needs of the Congregation of 65 families. When the Congregation outgrew their small church, the parishioners financed a new church under Sister Marie's leadership. They hosted many craft sales and by the dedication of the church, had it paid for.

For years, Marie and Kathy led a women's retreat that lasted several days. Even after they left Mississippi, they traveled down once a year to give the retreat, up until about five years ago. Since then the women who have participated in those retreats, picked up the torch and continued to plan a yearly retreat in addition to continuing many of the other ministries that were already in place. Today there are 14 Seton Associates who continue to carry the charism of charity in their hearts and lives.

Marie's love of God and God's people will always be remembered in Mississippi, as she will always be remembered in our hearts.

by Sister Marie Russo, SC