



SISTER MARIA MAGDALENA STUDER, SC

Entered eternal life on December 17, 2022

Today we celebrate the life of Sister Maria Magdalena Studer. How do you capture 71 years as a Sister of Charity and 89 years of life in a short time – I will try.

I want to begin with a quote from Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton which I think describes Magdalena:

“I trust to faithfully discharge every duty which my Master may give me to perform.”
Mag faithfully discharged every duty assigned to her and then some.

Sister Maria Magdalena (Mag) was born in Neptune, NJ, daughter of Carl and Maria Studer. Mag was the only girl in her family and was blessed with three brothers – Carl, Richard, and Peter. Her family lived in Maplewood, and she attended Saint Joseph’s Elementary School and Our Lady of the Valley High School, Orange. Mag had the Benedictines in Elementary School and the SSJ’s in high school so you might wonder how she ended up in the SC’s. Three of her mother’s sisters were Sisters of

Charity: Sisters Ruth Therese, Francis Magdalene, and Alice Mary Polhemus. Her father’s brother Richard and her mother’s brother, Eugene were Benedictine monks, so she was surrounded by religious all her life.

In 1951, on October 1st, Magdalena entered the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, and in October of 2021, celebrated her 70th Anniversary. She graduated from the College of Saint Elizabeth and the University of Notre Dame with her B.A. and M.A. degrees in Mathematics.

In her life as a Sister of Charity, Magdalena was missioned at the Academy of Saint Aloysius, Jersey City from 1954 – 1967 and taught Grades four and six in the elementary school for several years and then taught Math in the High School. From 1967-1969 Mag was missioned at Saint Peter’s, New Brunswick and then returned in 1969 to ASA as Principal of the High School for four years. In 1973 I was appointed Principal and Mag remained at ASA as Curriculum coordinator, Math teacher and was involved in many school activities as well as being an active member of the local community.

In 1977, she was missioned to the Virgin Islands where she served as Math teacher and Principal until 1985. Upon returning from the Islands, she came back to serve in Jersey City at Saint Aloysius High School as Vice Principal for Curriculum from 1985 to 1990. Mag then left Jersey City and traveled to New Mexico to teach at Saint Catherine’s Indian School where she served for the next eight years.

Upon returning to NJ, she served as Assistant Administrator of Maris Stella for several years where we remember her riding the tractor, doing repairs and being generally helpful wherever she was needed.

In 2015 Mag returned to New Mexico to serve in parish ministry for 12 years. Mag had a missionary spirit about her, and one of her greatest desires was to serve the Native American people – her mother’s family had native American roots, and how she loved serving the People of God at St. Berard’s Parish in Navajo. She encouraged several women to become Seton Associates and to this day the Spirit of Charity and Magdalena lives on in Navajo, New Mexico.

In 2015 Mag returned to New Jersey and was a resident of the Motherhouse for a short time and then was moved to St. Joseph’s Healthcare Center in Cedar Grove where she resided since 2018. These past few years had been difficult for her as her memory faded but she still had her smile.

These are some of the facts that are recorded on her life card, but now I will speak about Mag- the person who was a friend for over 60 years.

I lived at ASA with Mag for 14 years and she was one of the most generous and hard-working women I have ever met. She was a master teacher and dedicated and committed to her ministry, her family, and her life as a Sister of Charity. She taught me many things especially how to do a high school schedule. Mag also had a very creative side to her, making table decorations for special feast days, decorations for the windows in school at Christmas time, making Christmas ornaments, wall hangings, for family and friends. My sisters all received the fruits of her creativity at Christmas time. On Facebook, one of the young women whom Mag taught remembered that at Christmas she received a beautiful wall

hanging from Sister Mag who was her Secret Santa.

As a teacher, Magdalena was very respected. Many women who posted comments on Facebook spoke of her as someone who had a great influence on them; as teacher, mentor and how she touched their lives in so many positive ways.

In the reading from the Gospel of John, God tells us: “I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.” Magdalena you have influenced many lives and that fruit will last:

- as sister and aunt
- as teacher and mentor
- as friend and co-worker
- but most importantly as a Woman of Charity

Special thanks to

- all who cared for Mag in her illness-doctors, nurses, aides, hospice workers, Sister visitors.
- her friends, the Band of 1951, and all those who mourn her passing. Our consolation is that she is at peace.
- The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament who welcomed Mag to New Mexico.
- The Seton Associates in Navajo, New Mexico who will carry the Mission of Charity forward. We share this quote from Navajo Wisdom with the Associates who are with us by livestream:
*“The world rejoiced once you arrived in this world, and you cried that time.
Make it a point that once you die, the world will be crying, and you will be rejoicing.”*

Most especially the Sisters of Charity express their heartfelt condolences to Sister Magdalena’s – Mary Jo’s family

- to Peter on the loss of your sister Mary. How she looked forward to visiting you and your family.
- to her sisters-in-law – Michele (Carl’s wife) who was so faithful in her care for Mag; and to Pat (Richard’s wife) who visited Mag when she was at the Motherhouse.
- to her nieces and nephew, grandnieces and nephews and all members of the Polhemus and Studer families.

She now joins her parents, her brothers, and all the Sisters of Charity with whom she shared life.

Thank you, Mag, for the gift you were in my life, the life of my family and in the lives of so many others, for your 71 years of dedicated service to this Congregation, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, and to the People of God wherever you served.

Yes, you truly have “faithfully discharged every duty which your Master gave you to perform”. You will truly be missed, dear Sister and friend.

Sister Mary Morley, SC