

Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Lafayette, Louisiana

PRESS RELEASE

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A Sister's Amazing Life of Service and Love

Gifted with intelligence, humility, and a heart of gold, Sr. Marie of the Incarnation led an intriguing life as an Army Corps nurse during World War II before entering the convent.

A quiet sister whose death on March 25 at the age of 88 brought her religious community more feelings of gratefulness than sorrow, Sr. Marie led a simple life closed off from the world after entering the Carmelite cloistered community in Lafayette, Louisiana.

Talent seemed to run in her family in that her great uncle was Tom Watson, Alexander Bell's assistant in the invention of the telephone. Lena Watson, Sr. Marie's family name before entering the convent, entered the Carmelite Monastery of Mary, Mother of Grace at the age of 28 after a fascinating life of travel and service. As a young woman she attended St. Vincent's Nursing School in Birmingham, AL, where she received an award for outstanding service as a nurse, which had not been given to anyone for several years.

She also found herself on a new spiritual path. Born a Baptist, she converted to the Catholic faith upon the influence of the religious order of Catholic sisters who taught at the school.

"I realized there was a special Presence in the chapel," she recalled about the school in a short autobiography written before her death. It was that special presence that carried through her spiritual life at the convent until her death.

Upon joining the Army Nursing Corps in 1942, she served in hospitals in England, and then after the war in Europe, she volunteered for more service as a nurse in the Pacific. Several months after her death, the Community was informed that Sister Marie was eligible to receive four medals for her service as a combat nurse in WWII. These medals will be awarded to her posthumously in a solemn ceremony on February 7, 2009.

After her military service, Sr. Marie studied public health nursing at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. A note in her biography by one of her fellow sisters relates that she "never got a grade below an A," and was named in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*. It was there, while studying the faith under a Carmelite priest, that she first began seriously considering entering the convent.

Her biographer states that when she entered the convent, "her quiet, peaceful manner and beautiful smile endeared her to us at once."

Recognizing the need for a cook in the community, Sr. Marie requested to take on this task, which she carried out until nearly her death. "Her genuine contemplative spirit, generous heart and self-effacement were leading her constantly deeper into the great mystery of God and the presence of Our Lady," relates her biographer.

“Sister’s quiet, prayerful demeanor was an inspiration to all in the Community. She gave herself wholeheartedly to any Community need but always maintained her beautiful, recollected manner,” her biographer notes.

The 14-page biography and tribute to Sr. Marie of the Incarnation, complete with photos of her early and later life, is available for a free download at the website of the Lafayette Carmelites at www.lafayettecarmelites.org.

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