



## **Sister Dorothy Jose Lichtenberg, SC**

Entered eternal life on April 20, 2020

A statue in an Elizabethport park facing St Patrick's depicts Dean Martin Gessner, a staunch German instrumental in building both church and parish in his 40 years as pastor without incurring any debt. Sister Dorothy Jose Lichtenberg arrived at St Patrick's 40 years after the Dean. She shared his German heritage and frugal approach to finances but outlasted his tenure by working at St Pat's for 54 years. Many feel Sister deserves such a memorial as well.

Born in Newark, NJ, as the country slid into the Great Depression, Sister's life echoed the plight of many with a few of her early years spent in an orphanage as her parents struggled. Her brother Gilbert enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps and soon Dorothy found herself being raised by a single mother. Invited by the Sisters at St Antoninus School, Dorothy visited their Juniorate and enrolled in the high school. By the age of 16, she found her place as a Sister of Charity.

From an initial teaching assignment at age 17 while still a novice, Sister found her niche. Working in urban schools, she encountered families who mirrored her own. Kind empathy went a long way in encouraging generations of young people. Sister delighted in recounting stories of her early assignments – of the simple schoolrooms in Passaic, Paterson, and Newark. She was exceptionally proud of her role as the first sacristan of Sacred Heart Cathedral in 1954 serving alongside her friend Sister Margaret.

By 1958, Sister Dorothy found herself at St. Patrick's assigned to teach High School Math and accepting the role of Debate Coach and Forensics Club Moderator. Sister collaborated with the Mothers Guild and Fathers Club as they sponsored events to support the school financially. Her buoyant enthusiasm led to life-long friendships as she became fully embedded in parish life.

Within 10 years, Sister Dorothy's tenure in the classroom gave way to an office as Principal with duties as varied as preparing schedules by hand, hiring staff, keeping tabs on students, and ensuring building maintenance. Her door was literally always open; students knew 'DJ' as their staunchest supporter and toughest critic. As musical productions got underway in the 1960's, Sister organized ticket sales, sought advertisers for the productions and arranged the sewing of hundreds of costumes. St. Pat's also had a legendary basketball program and it was impossible to find a game without Sister in the stands – second guessing coaches and scolding referees.

In 2007, the alumni celebrated Sister's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Sister of Charity and the beginning of her 50<sup>th</sup> year at St. Patrick's with an open house that drew generations of alumni eager to reminisce and affirm this wonderful woman. She remembered them all. As the Archdiocese decided to close St. Pat's in 2012, Sister DJ cleaned out her office to the last paper clip eventually heading up to The Villa built on a field she first encountered 80 years earlier.

Good and faithful servant, may you rest peacefully in the arms of our loving God.

Kathy Skrupskis