

BIOGRAPHY

Dorothy Ann Clark

December 5, 1941 – January 20, 2009

Dorothy Ann Clark was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on December 5, 1941, to George and Dorothy Bussen Clark. Dotty described her mother as a traditional Catholic who treasured her faith and religious heritage; her father became a Catholic at the time of his marriage. Her mother was the nurturer of the family; her father the disciplinarian. His discipline must have been tempered with great love, for Dotty idolized him.

From first through fourth grade Dotty attended St. Anthony's parochial school in South St. Louis. It was there that she made her First Communion and was confirmed. From fifth grade on, Dotty and her sister, Georgia, three years younger, attended St. John the Baptist parochial elementary and high school. When Dotty was fourteen, her brother, George was born, and she quickly became his second mother. In her senior year of high school, Dotty won a partial scholarship to Maryville College, now Maryville University, which at that time was located in South St. Louis, not far from her home. In 1961, the college moved to a new site in St. Louis County, and it was from there that Dotty graduated *cum laude* in May 1963, with a major in chemistry and a minor in mathematics and philosophy. However, a glance at her transcript reveals several courses in her other great love, music. It was at Maryville that Dotty met Harriet Padberg, RSCJ, who became her mentor, confidant and life-long friend.

In September 1963, Dotty entered the novitiate of Society of the Sacred Heart in Albany, New York. In all the years before, Dotty had spent only three days away from her family. In her own words, "Saying that I was homesick was an understatement. It took quite a while before I could go longer than ten minutes without crying. I missed my family very much." On August 15, 1966, Dotty pronounced her first vows and, from the novitiate, returned to Maryville for further study in theology and philosophy.

In the fall of 1968, Dotty began teaching at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles, Missouri. In the catalogs of the next four years, her ministry is listed as "classes." True, Dotty taught high school science, math and music, but she didn't just *teach* those classes; she brought to the classroom enthusiasm and creativity. Every new interest or hobby found its way into her teaching. Way ahead of her time, she became concerned about water pollution and, in the summers of 1969 and 1970, attended a program on water pollution in New Hampshire. This interest led to the institution of a high school course in environmental science. Other courses followed: creative music, practical mathematics and photography.

At an early age, Dotty had learned to play the piano. As an RSCJ, she learned to play the organ and, later, taught herself to play the guitar. Her love of music was transmitted to her students, and her work with the high school chorus resulted in many outstanding concerts. An RSCJ who lived with Dotty at this time has never forgotten the concert at which the high school chorus sang an arrangement of the school song interspersed with the hauntingly beautiful 19th century American folk song, "Shenandoah," nor the African Mass, complete with drums, that she and her students prepared. Dotty remained at St. Charles until the high school closed at the end of the 1972 academic year.

The time had come for Dotty to begin the preparation for her profession. She asked to go to Africa for probation and made final profession on December 8, 1972, in Nkozi, Uganda, with the intention of remaining in Africa. Her time in Africa spanned almost twenty years, during which she served in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Zambia. She returned to the U.S. in the spring of 1983 for a sabbatical. During that time, she participated in the Institute of Pastoral Studies program at Loyola University in Chicago,

earning the degree of Master of Pastoral Studies. In the summer of 1984, she was accepted into the seven-week internship program in spiritual direction at the Jesuit Spiritual Center in Milford, Ohio, and, before returning to Africa in the spring of 1986 to begin a new ministry in spiritual direction, Dotty spent some time at the Society's Spiritual Ministry Center in San Diego.

Dotty made a scrapbook of her African years. It begins with the letter of Concepción Camacho, giving Dotty permission for probation in Uganda, and the cablegram to the vice-provincial, Helen McLaughlin, giving Dotty permission for final profession. It is filled with journal notes, photographs and pages of the music she wrote during those years. It was while she was in retreat before profession that the political situation in Uganda under the dictator Idi Amin worsened. Dotty's permit to stay in the country was not renewed and, on January 2, she flew to Kenya where, for some weeks, she was the only RSCJ in the country.

Upon learning of Dotty's death, Doreen Boland, former provincial of Uganda/Kenya, wrote: "During her years in the Uganda/Kenya province, I came to know Dotty as a very lovable and loving person, who made friends with all kinds of people wherever she sent. I remember her contemplative spirit, her simplicity of life, her desire to reach out to the people in her pastoral work. She served them with creativity, using her gifts of art and music to good effect. She was indeed gifted in many ways and even undertook the task of provincial bursar for some time." Dotty's interests were vast. She was adept at painting, watercolor and many kinds of crafts and composed music for her own enrichment. She never lost her interest in science, especially in what we call the new cosmology, new ways of looking at the world and the universe.

When Dotty returned to the U.S., she continued her work as pastoral minister in several settings, the last as a hospital chaplain at St. John's Mercy Medical Center and the Pratt Cancer Center located on the same campus. Dotty herself was suffering cancer by that time and related to the patients as someone who was, indeed, suffering with them.

In November 2008, Dotty moved from her Westminster community in St. Louis to the Philippine Community in St. Charles where the physical arrangements of the house enabled her to remain on one floor. Both communities surrounded her with love, but Dotty's physician suggested that she enter hospice care. This recommendation was very difficult for Dotty but she gradually accepted the fact that, in spite of her long and hard fight, she was not going to win her battle against cancer. During her few days in hospice, her room was filled with her religious sisters, her family and good friends. She died peacefully on January 20. She had willed her body to science.

A memorial liturgy was celebrated on February 21 in the shrine of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne. The presider was William Blume, C.S.C., for whom Dotty had directed several annual retreats during her years in Africa. It was a glorious celebration of her life. In final tribute to Dotty's love of Africa, a drummer from Africa joined his prayer to ours, accompanied by the beat of his drum.