



## *Sr. Maris Stella Footen, sfp*

**February 11, 1926—June 6, 2018**

Known for her quiet joy, her soft and gentle manner of speech, and her ready smile, Sr. Maris Stella loved being a nurse and a Franciscan Sister of the Poor.

Kathryn was born to Joseph and Mary Clare Footen on the cold morning of February 11, 1926 in Frostburg, Maryland, a city deep in the Alleghany Mountains. Being one of 10 children, Kathryn learned to get along with others from when she was very young. Though she describes herself as being a quiet child who lived simply from her youth, there were many happy moments spend


with her sisters Margaret, Agnes, Mary, Dorothy and Elizabeth and her brothers John, Thomas, Joseph and William. Becoming a nurse was always her passion, and though she felt a distinct call to be a religious sister, she resisted entering. "I was determined not to do it (become a sister). Later, I decided that if I wanted it as much as I wanted to be a nurse, then I would enter. It happened." Her pleasure in being a Franciscan Sister of the Poor and a nurse was to last throughout her life!

With her brothers and sisters, Kathryn attended and graduated from Hill Street School and Beal High School, both in Frostburg. Two years later, she pursued her dream and entered Sacred Heart Hospital School of Nursing, going on to further her education and proficiency in the various areas of nursing at Long Island University, Catholic University of America, and Seton Hall University.

In the midst of her professional growth, Kathryn's inner life also blossomed. She first became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, and with the guidance of her Moderator, Fr. Stephen Hardigan, explored the various Franciscan congregations who ministered in health care, choosing the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. She wrote to them, and after an interview with Sister Simon Petra, entered the congregation on August 15, 1956, at Mount Alverno Convent, Warwick, New York. Upon her entrance to the Novitiate, Kathryn received the habit and the name, Sr. Maris Stella, by which she was known for the rest of her life. She made her 1<sup>st</sup> Profession of Vows on March 8, 1959 and her Perpetual Profession on September 8, 1964.

Sr. Maris Stella used her education and professional experience well, serving as a nurse, nursing supervisor and community health nurse affiliated with such varied healthcare facilities as four Catholic hospitals in New York and New Jersey, Riker's Island Prison (where the inmates used to call her "Sister Smile"), West Chester County Medical Center and the Dominican Sisters Family Health Services as well as in Frances Schervier Home and Hospital.

Always proud of her Irish heritage, upon retiring from nursing, Sr. Maris Stella took up Irish Step dancing and proudly demonstrated her learnings at community gatherings. She thoroughly enjoyed participating in the choir at Holy Rosary Church, in Greenwood Lake, where she lived and stayed active, meeting with other women of the parish to fold bulletins on Saturday mornings and participating in Bake Sales and other activities sponsored to raise funds for various needs among the local people. Her specialty was baking raisin squares and sweet buns which she generously shared with the sisters at Mt. Alverno Convent.



When she could no longer live alone, Sr. Maris Stella relocated to St. Francis Convent in Warwick, NY, the place where she first entered the congregation, and continued to live as she had lived her entire life, quietly and serenely in God's presence. Here she delighted the sisters with her stories and songs, until a fall placed her at Schervier Pavilion. She recovered, and returned home to St. Francis, but in time, increasing weakness caused her to look at available options, Sr. Maris Stella decided to come to the Magnificat floor at St. Clare Convent, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Having made the choice to relocate at the opportune moment, Sr. Maris Stella easily adjusted to life at St. Clare's. She loved the nursing staff and the care she received, and knowing that her family would continue to visit her now that she could no longer visit them, she was at peace. She charmed everyone with her smile and her ready wit, and amused herself by reading on her Kindle and playing solitaire. Periodically during the past year, she would remind the staff that she was 92 and God had been extra kind to her for the many years!

Sr. Maris Stella's health gradually declined over the past few weeks. Fr. Tom Richstatter came to anoint her on Friday morning, and surrounded by her Sisters and family, she received the Sacrament of the Sick and renewed her religious vows. Many of her family members and her SFP Sisters had the opportunity to spend some time with her, and she seemed to rally her strength. With family at her side, Sr. Maris Stella was gently embraced by our good and loving God.

Written by Sr. Jo-Ann Jackowski, sfp