

## Sister Dorothy Jose Lichtenberg

With her perpetual grin and razor sharp memory and wit, Sister Dorothy Jose Lichtenberg is youthful and vibrant at 96 years old. Although she takes delight in her memories, her focus is not on the past, but on the surprises and joys of each new day. Her many years of ministry in education touched countless lives, and she continues to bless people each day through her presence, humor and selfless love.

Sister Dorothy Jose grew up in Newark, New Jersey. She enjoyed sports and games with the many children who lived on her street. Neighbors looked out for each other and kept track of comings and goings. Sister Dorothy recalls one time when her mother related a neighbor's account that Dorothy had stopped running in the middle of playing to pick up a little boy who had fallen. "The neighbors would report both the good and the bad, but that time it was good!"

Dorothy's mother modeled a life of faith and hard work. Sister Dorothy remembers, "My mother and I went to church for novenas and for every single thing going on. I was always her companion. She taught me more about the sacraments than anyone else." Dorothy's mother worked long hours to help support the family. "She worked hard and she always thought of other people."

Beginning in third grade, Dorothy attended St. Antoninus School in Newark. Here she encountered the Sisters of Charity. She says, "From the very beginning, they were something special." She recalls how one of the Sisters would generate enthusiasm for religious vocations. "She'd ask how many girls are going to be Sisters and the all the hands would go up!"

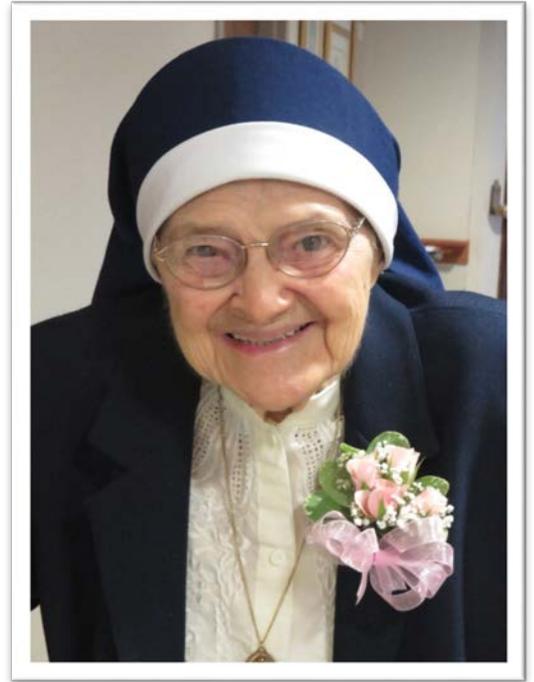
When Dorothy was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, a Sister arranged for Dorothy and her mother to visit the Juniorate, which was the boarding high school in Convent Station for girls interested in entering the Sisters of Charity. Dorothy liked what she saw and decided to enroll in the Juniorate in large part because she knew that her family could not afford tuition at a Catholic high school. "I loved the Juniorate and I loved the girls there. We all got along."

After three years at the Juniorate, Dorothy entered the Sisters of Charity. She was 16 years old and eager to begin her life as a Sister. She was given the name, Dorothy Jose, which at the time seemed to be a disappointing variation of Dorothy Joseph. She recalls her mother's reaction. "She said to me, 'Do you know what Jose means in German? Pants!'"

Sister Dorothy easily transitioned into life as a postulant and a novice. She learned more about her faith and also received training in practical skills such as sewing the habits as well as the nightgowns and undergarments worn by the Sisters.

With only minimal instruction in classroom management and lesson planning, Sister Dorothy was sent out at age 17 to being teaching at St. Nicholas School in Passaic. She recalls going out with another novice, who was all of 19 at the time, to meet the Sister who was in charge of the school. On asking the ages of her new teachers, the Sister exclaimed, "Oh my God, they sent me babies!"

Sister Dorothy's early teaching experience at St. Nicholas was the beginning of a long and rewarding ministry in education. Throughout her many years as an educator, she was always aware that education is a two way street and that she could learn from her students as well as from others who ministered with her. She says, "You take anything that's worthwhile from everybody and put it into practice." She enjoyed living in community with other



Sisters and especially appreciated being with older Sisters. She says, “We would tease the older Sisters and laugh with them. We had such good times!”

She went on to teach at Sacred Heart Cathedral School in Newark and St. John’s School in Paterson before accepting an assignment at St. Patrick’s High School in Elizabeth, where she lovingly served for 54 years. Sister Dorothy remembers right after getting the call to teach math at St. Patrick’s, “I asked the outgoing principal what math courses I would teach so I could prepare over the summer. She said, ‘Sister, you’re the Department!’”

Sister Dorothy willingly took on the challenges of teaching high school math. She says, “You have to study and know what you’re talking about.” She shares one of the secrets to her early success. “I would find out who the smart ones were and call on them for the answers!”

Although Sister Dorothy appreciated being able to rely on “the smart ones,” she was especially devoted to helping students who struggled with their studies. She says, “I never failed anyone who put in effort.” She was deeply committed to her students. “I knew they had to have love. They had to have understanding.” As she loved the students, the students loved her in return, affectionately referring to her as “Sister DJ.”

In addition to teaching math at St. Patrick’s, Sister Dorothy also served as the school’s Debate Coach. With her guidance, students learned how to stand up and make persuasive presentations, important skills that led to success in their professional careers. Many years later, her student debaters have continued to tell Sister Dorothy how much the experience benefitted them.

After 10 years as a classroom teacher at St. Patrick’s, Sister Dorothy became Principal, guiding the school through a period of growth and transition. As the school developed into a basketball powerhouse, Sister Dorothy was the team’s number one fan, readily identifiable behind the bench with her habit and her spirited (and vocal) support. She laughs as she recalls, “I’d yell, ‘That was a foul!’” A newspaper account captured a picture of a visibly upset Sister Dorothy when the team was losing, followed by a picture of a broadly smiling Sister Dorothy with the caption, “She won!”

Following 29 years as Principal, Sister Dorothy elected to move to other administrative roles at St. Patrick’s. She worked at the school every day until the school closed in 2012. She was 91 years old at the time.

A year after St. Patrick’s closed, Sister Dorothy moved to Saint Anne Villa, where she continues to live in community with her Sisters following the facility’s transition to become The Villa at Florham Park. Moving to the Villa gave Sister Dorothy the opportunity to make new friends. She says, “When you go someplace new, you find new friends, and it’s like you’ve known them forever.” She attends daily mass and participates in a broad range of activities, happily noting that “there are so many things to do that you can’t do them all.” She maintains good mobility with the aid of a walker and enjoys reading books and keeping current with newspapers. She still does sewing for herself and others, including the aides who bring their clothing to be hemmed or mended. She allows, “I can fix a zipper if it’s an easy make. Some are harder than others.”

Sister Dorothy just celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> Jubilee as a Sister of Charity. She loves the community and all the Sisters who have been her family for so many years. She says, “The Sisters of Charity that I know are charity. I hope they think that way about me.”

It is safe to say that not only the Sisters, but also her grateful former students and her many, many friends would agree that Sister Dorothy Jose does embody charity and joy. They join in congratulating Sister Dorothy on her Jubilee and praying for God’s blessings on her as she continues her life of love and charity.