

**Sister Agnes Schlereth C.PP.S.**  
**(Sr. Gervase)**

**Born: July 30, 1919**

**Professed: August 10, 1939**

**Entered into Life: December 13, 2011**

Verse on her memorial card: *“This is what God asks of you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8*



December 14, 2011

Sister Agnes Schlereth (Sr. Gervase) was a Sister of the Most Precious Blood whose arms opened wide across the 92 years of her life. From her early years in south St. Louis under the guidance of her beloved grandparents Antoine and Anny Ringwald, through her years teaching in elementary and high school, she was a bright light shining for the world to see.

It was on the feast of St. Lucy, December 13, 2011, that Sister Agnes peacefully entered into the light of Christ. She was born July 30, 1919, in St. Louis, Missouri to Henry Schlereth and Elsie Bromschwig. Both parents and her sister LaVerne have preceded her in death. Sister Isabelle Schlereth, a Sister of the Most Precious Blood, has been Sr. Agnes' faithful friend and at her side during her recent illnesses. They are one of the community's "Sister-Sisters."

When Sister Agnes graduated from St. John the Baptist High School she knew she wanted a career that involved helping people. At 20, she was leaning toward nursing school, but in the end the stronger pull was to follow her sister to the convent. She said: *“The calling is an important thing; it's not only that I wanted to do it, but I had to feel God wanted me to do it.”*

And Sister Agnes did have a chance to use her nursing skills when she spent a year as a missionary in Bolivia. At that time she was Sister Gervase which sounds like “beer” in Spanish so she changed to her baptismal name, Agnes. She learned to speak Spanish and to drive down mountain roads where the shoulders were dotted with slim, white crosses. *“Every day we went out in a VW bus to the poor areas where the doctors didn't go.”*

Beginning ministry in elementary schools, Sister Agnes taught children at St. Joseph School, Omaha, Nebraska and St. George and St. Nicholas Schools in St. Louis, Missouri.

On the secondary level, Sister Agnes taught at Assumption High School, O'Fallon, Missouri; Bishop Du Bourg High School and St. John the Baptist both in St. Louis. She was a pre-vocational teacher at St. Teresa School, St. Louis. Sister Agnes served as a principal at St. Mary's Academy for 15 years and a teacher at St. Mary's Junior College, both in O'Fallon, for 2 years. Under her leadership the school experienced years of growth

and development, and many lives were influenced through her direction and interest. During these teaching years she relied on her academic background in history and Spanish literature.

Yet more outstanding perhaps is the last twenty-four years Sister Agnes served along with her sister Isabelle at Sacred Heart Parish in Columbia, Missouri as a pastoral minister. There her special love for the poor became an important mission involving many volunteers and people of the parish. Sister Agnes was responsible for the church's outreach ministry. She was also the religious leader for the Social Concerns Commission assisting the lay volunteers to organize events that touched issues within the parish and throughout the globe.

*One of Sister Agnes' co-workers said of her ministry at Sacred Heart: "...she is the driving force behind the mission of social concerns. She has made the various components that are a part of what we do her life's goal: working with people who need help in Columbia, in the state, and in the world."*

While Sister Agnes was working in Columbia she wrote articles for the parish newsletter. A constant theme in these articles was encouraging the reader to be responsible for the poor and need to work toward creating a just, equal, humane, and compassionate society. Sr. Agnes said in the March 2009 issue that *"social awareness and action is not an option; it is essential."* And she lived that way. From inner city, St. Louis, to Bolivia; from Nicaragua to Columbia, Missouri, she brought her concern for the poor. One of her favorite quotes was from Matthew 25:31-40: *"As long as you did it for the least of my people, you did it for me."*

When Sister Agnes celebrated sixty years as a sister the Rev. Edwin Cole, priest at Sacred Heart, said: *"She is a person whom I admire because of her stability and her faithfulness to her commitments. She is a challenging woman on church issues and so keeps me thinking. There is a constant flow of people in and out of her office."*

Sister Isabelle says of her sister: *"She always says we are supposed to be the hands and feet of the Lord; and she lived that in her dealings with people."* This is true of Sister Agnes' 72 years in our community.

These last two years were challenging for Sister Agnes as her health declined. Parishioners from Sacred Heart Parish were very faithful in visiting Sisters Agnes and Isabelle. Their presence and care of the sisters was always greatly appreciated.

Let us together thank God and thank Sister Agnes for sharing her many gifts with our community and with the people of God. We can imagine Jesus welcoming her into new life with the words from the letter of Philomen: *"I find great joy and comfort in your love, because through you the hearts of God's people have been refreshed."*

Sincerely,

*Sr. Juan*

Sister Fran Raia, CPPS