**Sr. Cecile Ho On**

**Date of Birth: March 25, 1921**

**Entered Eternal Life: April 30, 2019**

**Remembrance by: Odette Haddad OSF**

Sister Cecile Ho On was born in Montego Bay, Jamaica, March 25, 1921, and died in Kingston, Jamaica, April 30, 2019. She was predeceased by her parents Aloysius and Cecilia Ho On; sisters, Lucille; Sister Mary Cordula, OSU; Inez; and Veronica, and brothers Joseph and Francis. Cecile was buried at the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany cemetery on the grounds of St. Joseph Teachers’ College in Kingston.

Cecile entered the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany in August 1941. She became a Novice August 15, 1942, made her First Profession of Vows August 16, 1943, and her Final Profession August 16, 1949. She ministered in Montego Bay for 58 years, teaching Grades 1-6 at Chetwood Primary School, CCD throughout the same school and leading the choir at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. Cecile devoted herself to the life and mission of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany for 78 years and lived joyfully her call to reflect God’s love and mercy to all with whom she came in contact. She retired to Immaculate Conception Convent in 2004.

Soon after the announcement of Cecile’s passing, Sister Teresita DeSouza reached out to Sister Anne Martin Robonie, who lived and worked with Cecile for many years and who now lives in Florida, to write a remembrance of Cecile to be read at her funeral. Sisters William Margaret Young and Christine Tenn, who also lived with Cecile, sent their personal remembrance as well.

Sister Anne Martin wrote:

The first thing I remember about Sister Cecile is her generous love of the poor. While she was at Chetwood, she had a special kitchen where food was prepared for the hungry children. She encouraged Miss Hall in that same devotion that she had. The children loved their SISTER CECILE. She also had the ministry at the backdoor of Mt. Alvernia Convent in Mo Bay. Whenever anyone came, she would give them a hot drink and something to eat. She never tired of answering their needs. Often, these persons would meet a Sister on the street and ask for Sr. Cecile. How is she? I am sure there are many persons in this church who have been recipients of her love. That love for you extended to her day of death.

Sister Cecile, we love you.

Sister William Margaret, as many of you know, is a nurse midwife and started Hope Health Teaching Clinic on the grounds of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. Care of the whole person - body, mind and spirit - was Sister Cecile’s mission. She had the food, through the generosity of many local and foreign benefactors, and she had the gift of touching and influencing the lives of those to whom she ministered, by her love, compassion, presence and CCD classes, all of which contributed to their spiritual formation. To address their health, Cecile, through her resourcefulness, partnered with Sister William Margaret to provide medical attention to the Chetwood children and the adults to whom she ministered at the back door.

Sister William Margaret said:

I am writing in the twenty-first century...memories of so long ago, yet vivid, and based on a true story. Sr. Cecile stands out as a true servant of God, defender of the faith and rescuer of the poor, especially children. Ask any Allegany Sister and she will tell you the same.

On one occasion, I drove the Clinic station wagon to the Brae River near Montego Bay to the Israeli farming business and returned to distribute "rejected" Zuchinni and cucumbers to Chetwood and the Clinic. The children in Sister Cecile’s lunch program shunned this strange looking veggie. Miss Hall reported this to Sister Cecile who spoke loudly, "How you come so foo foo? This vegetable comes from AH-Mer-aka.” There was no doubting Sister Cecile… the Zuchinni was gone in no time! Cecile added: “Everything made in or comes from America is good. God bless America."

Dear Cecile, you are not dead. You are in the loving arms of God. Pray for me.

Sister Chris Tenn wrote:

Sister Cecile was a spiritual giant (she likle but she tallawah), a devoted daughter of Our Blessed Mother and a champion for the children at Chetwood School. She was humble and caring for the "little ones" as she provided breakfast and/or lunch for the needy. She loved to teach CCD and she loved to sing. She was generous, and she cared about the well-being of her students.

Cecile would whip up a Saturday evening “special" for supper for the Sisters and boarders, FRIED RICE WITH SPAM; yes, every Saturday evening! (No wonder I don't care much for spam now.) Sister Charlotte O'Brien and I were instructed by Cecile to count oranges, one for each boarder…every day…they need their Vitamin C, she would say…and the oranges were to be washed!

Cecile was a very industrious person and she quietly got things done! She lovingly served the people she ministered to, and later in life she lost memory of those wonderful days. I know that God has lovingly kept them in His Heart for her. Cecile, you are no longer physically present with us, but your loving presence and deeds have made a difference in so many lives that you will always be remembered as a wonderful woman of God.

And now, my own reflection (Odette Haddad)…As a young sister, I lived with Cecile for seven years at Mt. Alvernia Convent. She was always reaching out to those who were poor and going the extra mile to provide for their well-being…with no apology for going the distance. I often asked her, “Cele, what’s your secret? Nothing seems to ruffle you. You don’t discriminate against anyone. You never stop giving of yourself. And you always have time to pray.” She answered: “Odie, it’s all about LOVE…that’s my motto! I love my God and I love my Church!” That lesson of LOVE has stayed with me over the years and has been food for my soul as I continually search for the deeper meaning of the love that was so much a part of this remarkable woman!

Often I would accompany Cecile to the Infirmary in Montego Bay for visits as well as for their annual Christmas dinner…bringing gifts and food. Watching how she interacted with the patients and caregivers was another life lesson for me.

After I moved to the states and was assigned to be editor of our congregational newsletter, I did a Spotlight on Cecile in January 1989. In my interview with her, when I asked why she became an Allegany Franciscan, she responded: “I came to Allegany because I wanted to give my life to God, and the Alleganies always seem so happy.” Regarding her ministry to the less-privileged, Cecile said: “All I want to do is spread God’s kingdom, live the contemplative life and make people happy. I also want to follow St. Francis more closely in his life of poverty and penance.”

Without a doubt, ALL Cecile’s desires have been fulfilled…through her fidelity to her personal relationship with God, her openness to God and His grace, her trust, her regard for all God’s creation as sister and brother and her UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

Thank you, Cecile, for being a bright light in the lives of so many!

You will be sorely missed by your Franciscan Sisters in Jamaica, Brazil, Bolivia, and the United States. Your life was a blessing, and your memory will live on in our hearts!!!