

The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See also the Fair at Lowell, Mass., Dec. XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and

Annals from the Archives

Sister Adele Marguerite King, 1898-1976 Her Life and Letters

Ethel King
At her 1915 graduation from
Fitton High School



May 2017
Written by
Nancy Barthelemy
Archivist
nancy.barthelemy@sndden.org
sndnewengland.wordpress.com
bolparchives.omeka.net

—Included in the small collection of Sister Adele Marguerite King's papers are several folders of letters—responses sent to her from friends, parishioners and others. During her life, she was a faithful correspondent to many, but she was most devoted to writing to two friends—Sr. Julie du St. Esprit Morgan and Sr. Marie Michael Grimes. Their letters to her offer an interesting insight into the life of one Sister of Notre Dame.

Sister Adele Marguerite King was born Ethel King on February 6, 1898, the daughter of Colin and Elizabeth (Le Blanc) King. Her home on Havre Street in East Boston was only a short walk to the Holy Redeemer Convent where the Sisters of Notre Dame lived. And so, it made perfect sense for Ethel and her sister, Lillian, to attend the Fitton School where the sisters taught. Ethel graduated from the high school in 1915. Two years later, she entered the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, taking the name Sister Adele Marguerite.

No doubt, her years as a Notre Dame pupil prepared her well in music. However, she must have shown a natural talent because in 1918, she was sent to St. Mary's in Cambridge to learn the Marie Von Unschuld method of piano instruction as part of her novitiate training. While at St. Mary's, she also taught music to the elementary aged children. In October of 1920, she was missioned to the Notre Dame Academy in Roxbury, where she again taught music. She made her first vows as a Sister of Notre Dame on Feb. 2, 1921, a day that she recorded in her journal as one that could "*not be expressed in words.*"

When she was sent to the Notre Dame Academy in Philadelphia in 1923, she met a sister with whom she maintained a lifelong correspondence, Sr. Julie du St. Esprit Morgan (1868-1947). Sr. Julie du St. Esprit was a prolific writer of at least 8 books on spirituality. However, as was common then, her identity as the author was not revealed. Rather the author was listed beneath the title as *A Sister of Notre Dame*. Sr. Adele Marguerite was a faithful correspondent with her, for which Sr. Julie thanked her again and again during her many difficult years of illness.

After two years in Philadelphia, Sr. Adele Marguerite returned to Massachusetts to teach at the Notre Dame Academy in Roxbury, where she professed her perpetual vows on Jan. 30, 1927. The following summer, she was sent to Washington DC. Her letter to Sr. Julie du St. Esprit just before the transfer must have given some indication of her anxiety about the move, because Sr. Julie responded to her on August 29, 1927. She said, "*I am so glad you have accepted this change in a religious manner and that you feel there is something awaiting you in Washington that will be a help to you in your efforts to please God. You may be very sure that God will never leave you stranded.*"

Sr. Julie's words were prophetic, because during her three year stay in DC, Sr. Adele Marguerite met Sr. Marie Michael Grimes (1886-1966), with whom she also maintained a long correspondence. During her years in DC, Sr. Adele Marguerite took courses at Catholic University in the Ward Method of Music Instruction, which was used to teach children the fundamentals of vocal music, as well as to help them understand sacred music. And she took classes with a Mr. Bernier, who taught organ,

harmony and counterpoint at Catholic University.

Sr. Marie Michael returned first to Massachusetts in 1930, but for only a short time to serve at the NDA in Roxbury. Sr. Adele Marguerite followed the next year to teach third grade at St. Mary's in the North End of Boston. In 1932, she was sent to St. Mary's in Lynn. The move was a hard one for Sr. Adele Marguerite, as Sr. Julie's letter of September 3, 1932 indicated, "*I am always sorry to see a new address at the head of your letter for I know how painful changes are and how difficult it is for you to take root in new soil.*" Those roots did eventually grow because Sr. Adele Marguerite remained in Lynn for the rest of her life. She kept up a consistent correspondence with Sr. Julie du St. Esprit, even pressing her sister, Lillian, into writing to her as well.

Sr. Julie viewed this with some amusement. At the end of May in 1941, she wrote, "*My Dear Sister Adele Marguerite, Thank you and your dear sister Lillian for your very kind greeting. Poor Lillian has to be obedient to her religious sister! and must write to Sr. Julie whom she has never seen. Tell her I appreciate her goodness.*" On July 7, 1942, she wrote to Sr. Adele Marguerite, asking her to thank Lillian for the colored paper she had sent her. Lillian told Sr. Julie that because of the war, she might not be able to send any more, and so Sr. Julie wrote to Sr. Adele Marguerite, "*You understand it is perfectly all right if she is unable to send me this kind. Sister Jeanne Marie who now has charge of the job at Trinity sent me some pieces such as I enclose. If, by any chance, Lillian has these I should be glad to have a few small pieces. Now knowing you, I beg you not to hound her and force her to go to the end of the world to procure them. If she hasn't them, she hasn't. . .*"

In 1934, Sr. Marie Michael was sent to the Academy of Notre Dame in Moylan, Pennsylvania, which had just become part of the newly formed Maryland province. It was while she served there that Sr. Marie Michael met Sr. Julie du St. Esprit. Letters from Sr. Marie Michael to Sr. Adele Marguerite often mentioned the latest news regarding Sr. Julie's health and any chance she had to visit with the older sister. In 1947, it was Sr. Marie Michael who wrote to Sr. Adele Marguerite to tell her about Sr. Julie's death. Sr. Adele Marguerite continued her correspondence with Sr. Marie Michael until her death in 1966.

During her many years at St. Mary's in Lynn, Sr. Adele Marguerite mostly taught music, reading and arithmetic to the younger children, but in 1935, she wrote in her journal with some alarm, "*Grade 7 boys!!*" Apparently she survived the challenge and continued teaching at St. Mary's until 1955, when she entered into her journal that she was now the convent's portress. Her work also included acting as an administrative aid to the superior of St. Mary's. As such, she handled much of the correspondence and other communications with the workers for the renovations of the new convent in 1965.

When the Massachusetts province divided in 1973, Sr. Adele Marguerite remained at St. Mary's in Lynn and became a member of the Boston Province. During those years, she worked to help the elderly and shut-ins. Sr. Adele Marguerite died in Worcester on August 13, 1976 and is buried in Lynn.



Ethel King, c. 1911



Sr. Adele Marguerite King at her Golden Jubilee celebration in 1971



Ethel King, c. 1913

Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ Sister Adele Marguerite King Papers, 2014.21.
- ◆ Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Entrance Records.
- ◆ Boston Globe Archives, 1872-2017.
- ◆ East Boston School Papers, 2013.50.