



# Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

St. Paul Province

**Mary Virginia Micka, CSJ**  
**May 12, 1922 - August 14, 2018**

**Teacher, Poet, Artist, Companion**  
*We see her now in eternal life, in eternal light.*

Mary Virginia's passing brings us closer to the eternal mystery of God, which she struggled with, lived with, and shared with so many of us over her 96 years of life. She revealed the God-Life to us through personal relationships, through ever-so-many words, and through her art. Yes, her Ytterli Press book, "In My Best Voice," will continue to bring her to us and, perhaps, more importantly, bring us to her.

Our Very Dear Frances Babb, CSJ, interviewed Mary Virginia back, w-a-y back in 1979. Frances recorded Mary Virginia's (Carol's) life beginning with her birth in 1922 to Anna Polsky Micka and Edward Micka in Hibbing, Minnesota, a small but prosperous mining town on the Mesabi Iron Range. There Carol was born on May 12<sup>th</sup>, the second of three daughters -- Marian, Carol, and Elizabeth (Petie), all three of whom later graduated from the then College of St. Catherine. Carol's response to her father, as he asked her about attending the College of St. Catherine was, "Well, sure, yes. Yes, I'll go."

That response now seems, in a way, almost non-chalant given Mary's Virginia's nearly 49 years as a student and then as an instructor at the College of St. Catherine. There she met Sisters of St. Joseph who influenced her life: Sister Maris Stella (Alice) Smith who was a notable poet of her day, Sister St. Mark Wirtz who designed much of the college campus with trees, and Sister Anna Goulet, a musician who inspired "sprightly music we called champagne music." Later, Mary Virginia developed a friendship with Sisters Mary O'Hara and Annette Walters who promoted a new way of educating younger members of the CSJ community, based on human development principles. Each was an artist in her own way and each influenced Mary Virginia's own call as a CSJ teacher, poet, artist, and life companion.

As a teacher of English at the College of St. Catherine, Mary Virginia followed in the footsteps of other CSJs in that department, especially Sister Alice Smith who bequeathed to Mary Virginia a love for Dante's poem, The Divine Comedy. Perhaps it was this love for Alice and for The Divine Comedy that sustained Mary Virginia throughout the many years of her life, years of anticipation for The Divine Presence. The Purgatorio Canto, in particular, was to Mary Virginia, FILLED with HOPE, yet interspersed with the humor and political satire of its day which she ever so deftly translated into the consciousness of her students.

Sabbatical times rolled around for teachers at the College of St. Catherine and Mary Virginia was eager to receive such opportunities. Off she went to Cazenovia, New York, among other places. Quickly, she found a home in Cazenovia where, at one time, she lived in an apartment above a funeral home and grew to love the people who did the important work beneath her, along with a love for the local writing community which warmly welcomed and benefitted from her presence. At another sabbatical time, she met New York City scholar and writer Broch de Rotherman who translated one of her poems into German with the idea of one day bringing out a German edition of her poems.

Perhaps, surprisingly, even to herself, Mary Virginia found another VOICE for herself in the visual arts, given the instruction and encouragement of artist Madeleva Williams, CSJ (Orange, CA), who guided Mary Virginia's use of color and brush work into abstract images such as seascapes, sunrises or sunsets. Other work then evolved into black and white charcoal drawings, perhaps of an even further abstract nature, yet of great appeal to those who purchased her work.

. . . And, always, let it be said that there was a chair in Mary Virginia's "office" – well, maybe the office was more of a home – where at St. Kate's and at Carondelet Center she welcomed so many people hoping to have a good conversation with her, or hoping to have their own writings critiqued, or hoping to find a Divine Comedy within their own lives.

Yes, Mary Virginia slowed down as she moved to Bethany and then to Carondelet Village where she received loving care by those who attended to and visited with her. Perhaps, now, we can once again hear her own voice echoed in Dante's Purgatorio:

- *If I had, Dear Reader, a longer space in which to write,*
- *I would sing at least in part of that sweet drink,*
- *which never would have satisfied my thirst;*
- *but because all the pages are filled*
- *planned for this second Canticle,*
- *the curb of art does not let me go further*
- *I came back from the most holy waters*
- *made young again, as new trees are in spring,*
- *when with new foliage they renew themselves,*
- *pure, and prepared to rise up to the stars.*

Mary Virginia is preceded in death by her parents Edward Joseph and Anna Evelyn (Polasky) Micka. She is survived by sisters Elizabeth (Petie) Micka Thouin and Marian Micka Pearson; Marian's children, James Ian, Bob, Tom, Jean, and Martha and their families; Petie's children Dave, Dick, Celine, Zoe, Veronica, and Monique and their families; countless friends; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates; and all those who sat in her chair.

Mass of Christian Burial was held Friday, August 17, 2018 at 11:00 AM, in Our Lady of the Presentation Chapel, 1884 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul, MN with Visitation at 10:00 AM preceding Mass. Burial was at Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights, MN.

**Mary Virginia, rest in love and peace.**

*Written by Mary Kraft, CSJ*