**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

**Sister Simonne Doucette**

(Sister St. Berthold)

July 24, 1922 - December 28, 2014

***“My being proclaims the greatness***

***of the Lord,***

***my spirit finds joy in God my savior.”***

***(Luke 1:46)***

 Sister Simonne Doucette (in religion, Sister St. Berthold) was born in Hamlin, Maine on July 24, 1922. Her father, Paul, was also born in Hamlin and his second wife, Clara Levasseur, was born in Caribou, Maine. Simonne was the fifth child born in a family of twelve. She was baptized at St. Joseph Church in Hamlin.

 Her father married twice as his first wife died at the birth of his first child. He then married his wife’s sister.

 Paul inherited the homestead and took care of his parents. His home was a dwelling where family members would often come to visit and sometimes stay. Her uncles also arrived when their seasonal work in the woods came to an end. They usually arrived for the Christmas holidays and would buy beans, flour and barrels of salt pork to help pay for their room and board and to help defray the family expenses. Simonne always remembered the many wakes that took place in her home.

 Her mother carried a heavy burden rearing their large family and caring for others. She was a very happy and loving person and was known to enjoy the gatherings at her home and often played the piano at their get-togethers.

 With her four sisters and three brothers, Simonne enjoyed her life on the farm where she cultivated a garden, worked in the fields, picked potatoes, milked cows, and fed the animals.

 At the time of Simonne’s childhood the church was the center of the family’s social life. It was also where strength was found for life. If you offered your day to God, you found an uplifting spirit that took you through the happiness and hardships of the day.

 Simonne made her first communion and confirmation at St. Joseph Church in Hamlin. She lived a mile away from the church, but the family always attended Mass on Sunday. This day was sacred for the family who always respected the Lord’s Day.

It was in this atmosphere that Simonne was brought up in the warmth and love of a large family. She was curious, mischievous and a very brave child. She was described by her mother as being somewhat of a “Tomboy.”

 Toys and play equipment were not purchased. If the children wanted something to play with, they had to use their creativity and imagination to make it with whatever materials were available or could be found.

 Simonne lived a life similar to the Walton Family on television long before the program became a popular series.Her life on their Hamlin farm was a simple, rewarding life filled with all of God’s beauty. This is how she described her early years.

 *As a child I grew up in a Christian family with happy and sad moments. My parents had great faith, but what stayed with me was the beautiful faith they possessed in the parish priests. When sickness occurred in the**family*

*the priest was the first person called upon. The day after my First Communion, our home was destroyed by fire. We lost everything. What courage and faith it took for my parents to start over, especially during the days of the great depression.*

 *One can see that our parents were the ones who influenced our lives by their great Christian faith. There was also one teacher who provided our excellent education in our little one-room school containing grades one to eight. Her name was Ms Blanche Thibodeau Ayotte (who was the sister of our late Sister Isabelle Thibodeau).*

 *God works in strange ways. My first contact with the Good Shepherd Sisters was when Father Dube, our pastor, contacted the Sisters in Van Buren to have them teach religion in Hamlin for three weeks in the summer. One of those Sisters asked me if I would be interested in religious life. That Sister was the late Sr. Yvonne Bernardin. My first reaction was that I didn’t know much about sisters and religious life. After gathering information, I decided to try it out. My parents hesitated since I* *was only* *sixteen years old.* *After much prayer and discernment, I heard the Lord say “Come, my beloved and I will be your guide”.*

 *I entered the Good Shepherd Convent at 69 Adams Street, Biddeford, Maine in 1938. I made my temporary vows at St. Joseph Church. In 1945 I pronounced my perpetual vows at the Mother House in Quebec.*

 *At my profession I was given the name of Sister St. Berthold. My first mission was to St. Anne Orphanage. I traveled to St. Anne School to teach and on weekends would help with the boys at the Orphanage.*

 *Teaching was not my preferred way to serve the Lord. My deep desire was to work with the children of the Orphanage. To become a surrogate mother to the boys who had received very little love in their homes. My dream was realized as I served for almost twenty-five years at St. Anne Orphanage. My service to the Lord and Community consisted of many other forms of work. Whatever I was asked to do, I always accepted as being God’s Will. I had a full career of teaching, housemother, superior, supervisor of the Bay View Gift Shop and many other tasks.*

 Whatever Sister Simonne was asked to do was always done for the “Glory of God.” She served with all her heart. Her faith is what kept her going and she **Communicated Love** **and Goodness** to all the people she met in her long and beautiful life.

On one occasion Sisters from her local community gave the following testimonials regarding Sr. Simonne:

 “Sister Simonne Doucette deserved high praise for her leadership while she was Superior of Bay View Convent. Her concern for all the Sisters went beyond the call of duty. This concern also reached out to all the Sisters who came to Bay View for retreats or vacations. She was quick to recognize and give credit for services rendered– especially at the time of funerals or jubilees when so much cooperation was needed from all the Sisters. Any Sister’s relatives or parents were sure to receive a friendly welcome from her. If they were from out of state, they were offered to sleep over. I always appreciated Sister Simonne also because of the way she trusted the Sisters to fulfill the chores or other duties entrusted to them thereby making authentic the autonomy so much spoken about.”

 “ Sister Simonne was always good and sympathetic for the sick Sisters. She visited them often and her smile was always greatly appreciated.”

 “Simonne was a gracious person, a good listener available to her Sisters. I never once saw her in bad humor or unapproachable. She seemed to be naturally jolly and pleasant to everyone.”

 “Simonne was a promoter of peace. She was kind, gentle with a good sense of humor. She was a very religious and gifted leader.”

 Sister Simonne clung to life as long as humanly possible. She had great faith in the anointing of the sick and received this sacrament frequently on her journey to the Lord. On December 28, 2014, Simonne died peacefully and joined her Beloved in Heaven.

 She is survived by a brother, Eli Doucette, from Simsbury, CT, and several nieces and nephews.

 A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. Joseph Convent on December 30, 2014. Her burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery.

 Officiating at the Mass was Reverend David Schlaver, C.S.C,, acting Chaplain, assisted by Rev. Hubert Paquet, retired Chaplain.

 In his homily, Father Schlaver shared his reflections of Sister Simonne:

 *Sister Simonne certainly had a positive attitude toward life and death. She loved life, giving it her full attention and effort for an amazing 92 years. She spent her life encouraging her young charges as a good housemother. She was a natural teacher–kind and fair and equipped with some very useful creative woodworking skills which caught the interest of her students and helped prepare them for life.*

 *She was respected by her Sisters in Community as well, for those same virtues of kind, encouraging words, fair decision making, and always a kind smile.*

 *As her health declined and she became more dependent on care givers, she continued to be cheerful, loving and ready to write the next chapter in her life. She walked by faith and knew her time to die had come. She was anxious to accept the Lord’s promise of eternal life. Since she followed Jesus–the Way, the Truth and the Life– she trusted deeply in God’s love and now abides in God’s light.*

*May His light shine ever upon her in her heavenly bliss.*

 Sister Sharon Leavitt, S.C.I.M.

Foundation Day of the Good Shepherd Sisters

January 12, 2015