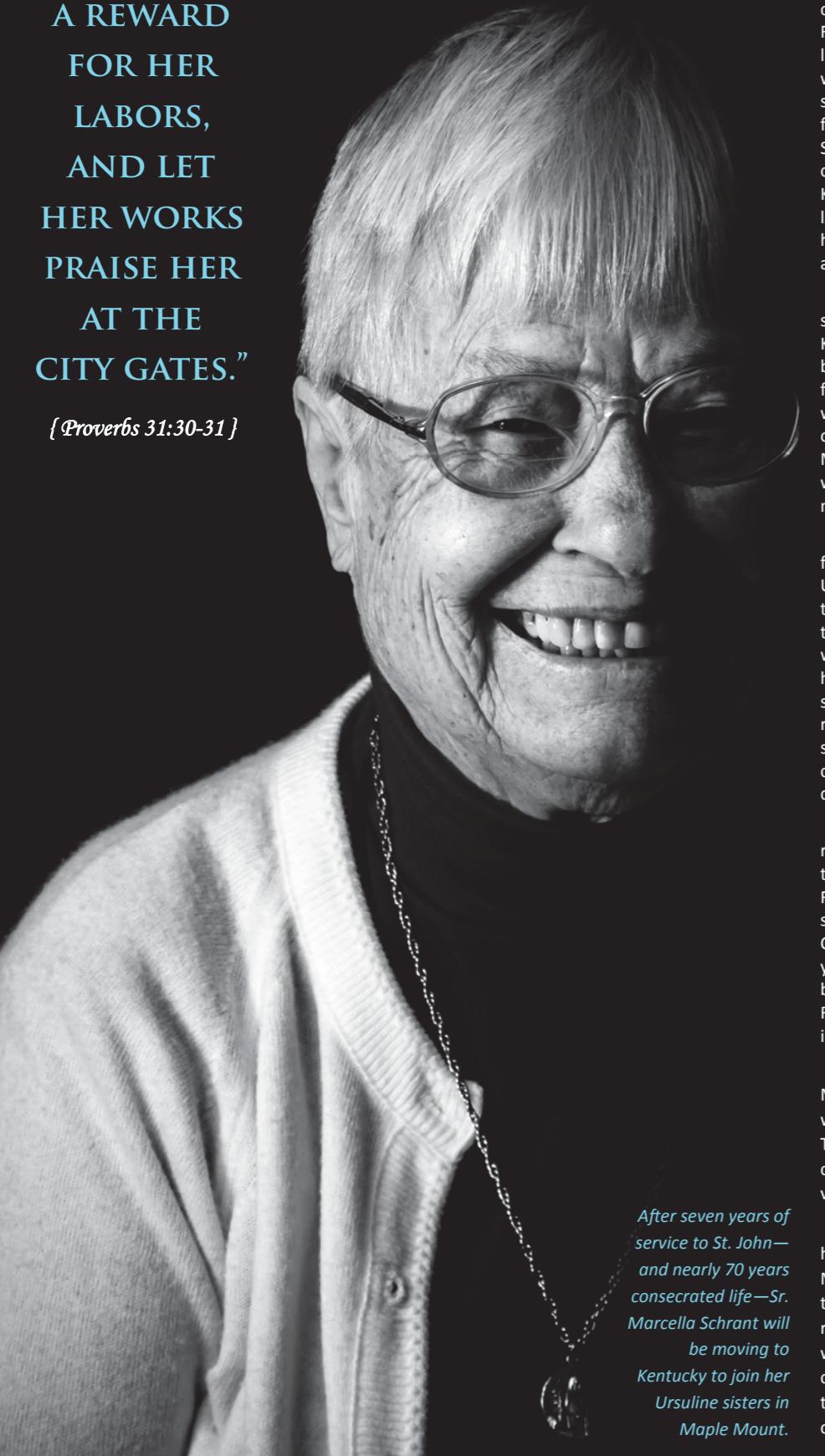


**"GIVE HER
A REWARD
FOR HER
LABORS,
AND LET
HER WORKS
PRAISE HER
AT THE
CITY GATES."**

{*Proverbs 31:30-31*}



After seven years of service to St. John—and nearly 70 years consecrated life—Sr. Marcella Schrant will be moving to Kentucky to join her Ursuline sisters in Maple Mount.

In this weekend's readings we are reminded to make the most of the gifts we have been given and, as St. Paul writes, be children of the light, not of the darkness. For the past seven years we have had a light shining brightly in our parish, welcoming community members with a smile (and even the occasional Snickers bar for her younger visitors). Sr. Marcella Schrant, who after nearly 70 years of consecrated sisterhood will be moving to Kentucky to be with her Ursuline sisters later this month, has long been a model of how to take God-given gifts, nurture them, and see them multiply.

Sr. Marcella grew up in Walker, a small farming community in western Kansas. She was the fifth of seven children born to Henry and Katie Schrant, who were farmers. "We moved to Richmond in 1939, when I was in the 8th grade. I went to a one-room schoolhouse for a year," Sister Marcella said. "We played ball on Sundays, we watched the adults play cards. I had to milk the cows before school."

It was in Richmond that Sr. Marcella first met the Ursuline Sisters. "The Ursulines came over on Saturday mornings to the church in Richmond to teach religion to the public school students," she said. "I was 12." Six years later, Sr. Marcella found herself enrolled at Ursuline College in a secretarial program. Shortly after that she realized her true vocation: "I was there one semester and I decided to enter the community. I guess it was the Lord's doing."

One of the talents Sr. Marcella recognizes she has been given to share throughout her life is the gift of teaching. Following her time at Ursuline College, she started teaching at Holy Name in Kansas City, Kansas. This was the beginning of 43 years as an educator, with time shared between Holy Name, St. Agnes School in Roeland Park, and St. Patrick/Holy Trinity in Paola.

Sr. Rita Lavigne, who taught with Sr. Marcella at Holy Name, recalled: "There were six sisters there, we had so much fun. There was much laughter and joy in the convent. She was a good teacher and a very good cook."

Cooking—a skill passed down from her mother—is another gift that Sr. Marcella readily shares, whether it is taking over in the school kitchen so the regular cooks can have a vacation, helping whip up Christmas dinners for the Ursuline community, or preparing jams and jellies to sell at fundraisers. Cooking and playing cards remain two of her favorite pastimes.

Fr. Jerry Spencer was a long time pastor at Holy Name and chaplain at the University of Kansas Medical Center, where Sr. Marcella was recognized for volunteering more than 1,000 hours of service. He met Sr. Marcella in 1967 and they quickly developed a strong friendship (and intense ping pong rivalry). "Sister Marcella and I have shared a lot of good times and hard times together," he said. "She's very dedicated. She enjoys being a member of the Ursuline community. She throws herself wholeheartedly into whatever she does."

Sr. Marcella is remembered well by her former students, Father Spencer said. "She's endeared by everyone who knows her. She's a model religious, a living example of religious vocation," he said. "She's impacted and touched a lot of lives."

Sr. Kathleen Condry, who served as superior of the Ursulines of Paola until 2008, said Sister Marcella's former students have very fond memories of their childhood days in her class. "They remember all of the fun and creative strategies she employed in her teaching, how much joy there was in her classroom. They remember what she taught them about life and about how to be a good person. Most of all, they remember how much she loved them and they loved her."

"One of the many things I admire about Marcella is the way she enjoys life and intentionally plans ahead to include in her day the special, holy little moments that bring her joy," Sister Kathleen said. Crossword puzzles, naps, walks to the cemetery, flowers, time alone on the lawn chair with her iced tea and prayer book, bridge games, making jelly, good novels, visiting with friends and relatives — she truly loves life and makes sure that she doesn't let it fly by without savoring and appreciating it."

Sr. Marcella continued teaching in the elementary levels until 1990, when she was elected superior of her community. Following a four-year leadership stint, she arrived at the St. Lawrence Catholic Campus Center in 1994 and remained there for 10 years, managing the front desk and getting to know many college students.

"Students would come in and sit down on the bench [by the front desk] and we would talk," Sr. Marcella reflected. "One of the nicest things I remember was students saying, 'you made my day with your smile.'"

Following her time at St. Lawrence, Sr. Marcella was assigned to Holy Family in Eudora, a parish that was at the time without a pastor. Her duties, which initially involved visiting the homebound and leading prayer before Wednesday night classes, quickly multiplied and she found herself in charge of religious education, as well first communion and confirmation preparation.

In 2007 the archbishop informed Sr. Marcella that a priest was being assigned to Holy Family—this was a blessing, but it also meant that it was time for her to

"FOR I KNOW WELL THE PLANS I HAVE IN MIND FOR YOU, SAYS THE LORD, PLANS FOR YOUR WELFARE, NOT FOR WOE; PLANS TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE OF HOPE."

{*Jeremiah 29:11*}

move on. That was when Fr. John Schmeidler invited her to come join the St. John staff.

"She has the ability to lighten up people. She has a deep faith that sparks it in other people," Fr. John said. "You will not find a more charitable person, whether it's to someone on the phone, or people dropping in, she will make them feel special. That spirit flows out into the rest of the staff."

The longevity with which that spirit of light continues to flow through Sr. Marcella is due in no small part to a consistent life of prayer, which she considers the biggest gift she has to offer. "I do a lot of praying to the Holy Spirit," she said, "especially when I was superior—the poor Holy Spirit didn't get much rest during those years."

"I pray to the Blessed Mother quite often," Sr. Marcella added. A daily rosary is part of her prayer routine, although the Holy Mass is still her favorite form of prayer, one that she takes part in daily.

When asked what advice she might have to people as they seek to develop a richer prayer life, she said, "Prayer is supposed to be something special [and not something to rattle through]. People need to slow down, and really pray. We just

need to remember that Jesus is all around; He is with us all the time."

In a life that has seen her stationed at a variety of schools and parishes, Sr. Marcella now finds herself in another transition: leaving Lawrence to move to Maple Mount, Kentucky, where the Ursuline Sisters of Mount St. Joseph reside. "I am at peace," she says of the move, as she reflects on the scripture passage from Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe; plans to give you a future of hope."

Sr. Marcella is certainly filled with hope and joy, and has passed those gifts on to the many students, staff and community members she has embraced throughout the years. No doubt she will continue to nurture these gifts in Kentucky.

A few items remain on her checklist before she leaves Lawrence, not the least of which is attending one more basketball game of her beloved Jayhawks, which she will do on November 24. Her Jayhawk fandom will continue after the move, but as for her number one team? "Well," she said, "it will either have to be KU or UK."

Jayhawks and Wildcats aside, there is no doubting Sr. Marcella's loyalty to her Catholic faith and to the many people she has worked with in service for so many years.

"It has been great working here; I have loved every minute of it. People have been so gracious to me. I'm going to miss them all."

Portions of this story were taken from a 2012 interview by Dan Heckel. That full interview can be found on the Ursuline Sisters website: www.ursulinesmsj.org

The interview is also posted on the St. John website: www.saint-johns.net