



**Mary Conter SL (formerly known as Mary Esther)
Born November 9, 1919 – Died May 6, 2010**

Mary wrote, "My childhood was characterized by many moves from Wisconsin to Iowa to Kansas to Colorado, a return to Kansas and finally settling in Denver in 1929." In her 1976 autobiography, Mary commented: "A sad memory and one which I realize now had an effect on my life, was the death of my baby brother when I was six years old. He was six weeks old at the time of his death."

Mary completed her elementary and high school education at Holy Family School and received a Bonfils scholarship which enabled her to attend Loretto Heights College. She decided to join the Community in 1940.

Sister Mary Esther earned her BA degree in French with minors in English and Philosophy and a Theology Certificate at Loretto Heights College.

Mary wrote: "For many years I taught elementary school in Kentucky, Missouri, California, Arizona, Alabama, Illinois and Colorado. Many of these years also found me doing CCD work in parishes and attending summer school to obtain my teaching certificates."

Studying at the University of Notre Dame in 1965 was the beginning of major change in Mary's life. She became aware of many other facets that she had not explored and many new outlooks regarding Theology and religious life. This coincided with Vatican II renewal. It seemed understandable then, that she would, could and should change her type of work and leave classroom teaching.

In her 1976 reflections on the changes she pursued, Mary wrote: "I received my MA in August 1970 and went to Pueblo to work at Guadalupe Parish in charge of Religious Education and parish visiting. I also became part of the Diocesan Religious Education Office for three years and became the Chairperson of the

Committee on Special Religious Education for the Diocese. Our parish began a program for special students and I directed it. The most eventful and challenging years of my life have been these past six and a half years in Pueblo.”

“One of the most rewarding experiences in my life was the year and a half of Clinical Pastoral Education that I had at Colorado State Hospital. It changed my life by making me more aware of both my assets and faults. In working with the staff and patients I have found a whole new ministry and one which I sometimes wish I had found sooner.”

From about 1977 Mary’s ministry was to the geriatric patients at the Colorado State Hospital. She observed: “It can be a real challenge, it is at the same time rewarding. Many people just need some one to listen to them and show concern and love.” Mary also became a member of the Pueblo Council on Aging and in 1981 she was a delegate from Pueblo to the Governor’s Conference on Aging. As a result, in 1985-86 she helped organize and put on the Statewide Affirmative Action Conference as a member of the State Hospital Affirmative Action Committee. As part of the Institutional Chaplains Association Mary helped work to have the state personnel rules changed so that a person did not have to be ordained in order to be a chaplain in the state system.

In closing her autobiography, Mary wrote: “In spite of difficulties which are always a part of life, I feel that these last fifteen years, since I came to Pueblo and especially the last ten since I began working at the State Hospital, have been the best years of my life. The changes in our community and in the church have played a big part in these feelings of satisfaction. It has been a time of growth and I would truly say that for me life began to blossom in the past ten years.”

After leaving the State system, Mary became a Chaplain at Sangre de Cristo Hospice from 1990-1995, followed by four years as Director of Pastoral Care of Hospice in Pueblo.

Now what Mary doesn’t mention, which was typical of her, is that in 2000 she received the Papal Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal for her teaching, work with hospice, and 30 years of services to the people of Pueblo— quite an honor!

Mary retired in 2000, moved to the Loretto Center in Denver in 2002 and to the Motherhouse in 2007.

Mary, you were there to listen, to act, and show concern and love. God bless you!