



**Virginia Fetters SL
(formerly M. Justin SL)
June 26, 1915 — October 15, 2010**

Virginia Fetters, daughter of Justin S. Fetters and Helen F. Maguire, grew up in Kansas City and attended Loretto Academy. She was president of her class in 1932, '33, and '34. In addition, she was a member of *The Laurelette* staff in 1934.

In an interview Virginia noted that she was the twelfth child in her family, and the only one born in a hospital, St. Anthony's. Virginia said, "I believe it was a hospital for unwed mothers and newborns, and that's why my twin brothers, who were the bane of my existence, always chided me that I was adopted." When she entered grade school, her classmates always talked about their little brothers and sisters. So at lunch time she would run home and say, "Momma would you get us a baby? I'm the only one in the class who doesn't have a baby brother or sister, and Mom would say, 'We'll see.'"

Virginia taught for 30 years in Arizona, Alabama, Texas, Kentucky, and Missouri. Then in 1970 after she earned her MSW she began working with the Kansas State Department for the Aging in Topeka. She put in place Meals on Wheels, homemaker services, educational programs such as pre-retirement institutes, and intergenerational support programs. She traveled widely through the state visiting senior centers.

Virginia was known for her keen sense of humor and spirit of fun. Mary Ann

Cunningham writes: “Yes, I have many memories—on her 83rd birthday, she was down at the Lake of the Ozarks with Mary Ann Coyle, my family, and me—and she put us all to shame by her ability to lie on her back on the ground, put her legs STRAIGHT UP in the air, and bring her toes all the way down to touch the ground on either side of her head. I wish I had a picture of it.

“Another great memory: It was Ash Wednesday, and we were going down to support women’s ordination outside the Cathedral in Kansas City (in about 1989). Mary Leibman had made a wonderful banner about ‘Now is the acceptable time’ and I was driving my brother-in-law’s truck with four of us Loretos in the front seat. Virginia, Mary McNellis, my aunt Anna Marie Plowman, and I—all grads of Loretto Academy—singing the school song at the top of our voices with the car windows open even though it was the coldest day of the world! ‘We are here, Loretto dear, to laud your glories to the sky. We, your children true, and we’ll stand by you...’ It was so cold that Anna Marie and Virginia kept slipping into the church to warm up.

We had many good times in KC with “Feathers” as she called herself.”

Virginia wrote in the April 1991 issue of *couRAGE* about her priestly work with the sick and dying: “I am a chaplain serving three inner city hospitals in Kansas City: the city hospital (Truman Medical Center), Western Missouri Mental Health, and Children’s Mercy. I love my profession and I am good at my work. I feel God has given me a special talent to minister to people who are sick in body, mind, or spirit.

“I have the same training, CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education), as any ordained clergy person. Unfortunately, since I am not allowed to be a permanent deacon or an ordained minister in our Catholic Church I am not allowed to administer the Blessing of the Sick. Many times in my ministry, I have experienced being intimately present for weeks with a terminally ill person; yet, when he/she requests the Blessing, I have to call in an ordained clergyman who, more often than not, does not even know the patient’s name. I call for a priest, that is, I call, but I cannot always find one! Many times it has happened that I call and call in vain.

“Hope springs eternal, “ they say. Perhaps before I am 85, the Pope will understand the plight of this lowly Catholic nun and join me in affirming that I am the right person to bring the last consolations of the church to a dying person.”