



**Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi**

May 2017

Since 1849

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Dear Friend,



In December of 2016, Sr. Leander Liu celebrated her 100th birthday. As I was gathering information about her for our newsletter, *Nojoshing Notes*, I came across the transcript of her oral autobiography. When I tell the stories of our sisters, I interview them and write from those notes. For this letter, I want to use some of Sr. Leander's own words. She told her story in English, her second language, which is very different from her native Mandarin Chinese.

"I was born in Guión, China. I had one brother who was three years younger than I. His name was Liu Chin Chiong, and he lived to be about 70 years old. He had three sons, two daughters and many grandchildren. My father died when I was four years old and my brother was five months old.

"I lived with my mother, grandmother, grandfather and brother. We lived on a farm and had a large property with hired help. We had two homes. My grandfather was so kind to the people. He helped the missionaries to tell the people about God. The Pastor came to our place twice a year. The Catholic people came to our house for Mass, confession, etc. My grandfather died very peacefully.

"When I was little, the Pastor asked me, "When you grow up, what will you be?" I said, "I want to be a sister and work for God." At that time, I did not know what sisters looked like. I only heard that they work for God.

I came to our school in Hungkialou and the Pastor told the sisters that I would be a sister in their order.

"With Sister Esther Minch's guidance, I entered the community in Hungkialou (Shantung Province), China. I was a postulant for one



Sister Leander Liu with her charges at the orphanage in Superior, Wisconsin.

year and a novice for two years, and then came profession [of vows]. I had a variety of jobs. I helped Sister Julian Aldrich as a nurse's aide. I mended Chinese shoes and helped Sister Veronica with the postulants.

“We had heard that the Communists would come, so Mother Bartholomew Frederick wanted us to come to the United States. Sister Caritas Kuehna took care of ordering our plane. We went to Shanghai and waited three months for the ship. The trip on the ship took three weeks. We arrived at our Milwaukee convent on St. Francis Day, October 4, 1948.

“Here I learned English and helped in the St. Ann Infirmary dining room. After perpetual vows (1950), I was sent to St. Joseph Orphanage in Superior, Wisconsin. I helped in the nursery with the children who were two to five years old. We were two sisters taking care of the children. I did sewing for the sisters and sacristy until 1962, when I returned to helping in St. Ann's Infirmary.”

From 1964 to 1974, Sister was at St. Coletta School in Jefferson, Wisconsin, helping Sister Julian as a nurse's aide. She then attended



Sister works with a child at the special education school in Tainan.

Cardinal Stritch College (University) in Milwaukee, taking classes on the care of children with special needs.



In 1975, she went to Taiwan to work, and described her time there in her notes. “We had about 10 teachers for the special education children in Tainan. I took the bus to go to the school, so I had to walk to the bus station. That is when I learned to ride a bicycle so I could ride to the bus station. Later I helped in the dormitory at Kuang Jen Middle School in Taipei. There were about 250 girls on three floors. In 1983, I had to decide whether to go back to Tainan or come to the United States. That time I really prayed hard and finally came to the U. S.”

Upon returning to the States, Sr. Leander lived and worked in many capacities at the Motherhouse. She learned to do Chinese brush painting and also mentions that she learned to make crocheted angels. Keeping

(1977) At St. Raphael Opportunity Center in Tainan, Taiwan, Sister teaches a child with disabilities to say words and simple sentences.

holy hours in the Adoration Chapel has been a practice of hers for years, and until recently, Sr. Leander went down for adoration every afternoon. She still attends community Mass and prayers, and finds praying with others to be very fulfilling. She also enjoys playing with others, so you can find her at Bingo regularly or involved in a card game when the opportunity presents itself. And in her late 90's, she developed a passion for Wii Bowling!



In 1979, diplomatic relations were reestablished with China, and our sisters were able to go on home visits. Sr. Leander wrote, "For many years after I came to the U.S., I received no news from home. My brother worried about me. He put a few words in another sister's letter, so I wrote to him. He then told me my mother had died several years ago. The Communists had taken our property and our home. The people suffered much. After a few years we were able to go to China to visit."

This photo of the Chinese sisters was taken in the Oriental Room at the Motherhouse in 1987.

(l to r - standing) Sr. Theresa Chu †, Sr. Ursula Shia †, Sr. Leander, Sr. Charlene Chang, Sr. Jordan Lee †.

(l to r - seated) Sr. Clara Han †, Sr. Cyril Lee †, Sr. Francesca Chow †.

Sister Leander visited her family in China five times between 1985 and 2000, but each time there were fewer relatives of her own generation to visit, so it was the duty of nieces/nephews and grandnieces/nephews to host her. Because the land her family had owned had been confiscated, she never really did return home, but she took great joy, nonetheless, in visiting her homeland, eating authentic Chinese food and participating in family get-togethers.

It was a joy to celebrate with Sister Leander on her 100th birthday. She was amazed to

(at right) Sister celebrating Chinese New Year in 2005, the Year of the Rooster. Each year, in recognition of this holiday, the congregation holds a celebration in the dining room at Clare Hall.



