

## Memories of a Conversation with S. Geresine Leffert, SSND

*The author, S. Judith Best, SSND was visiting S. Geresine at Villa Gesu in the late 1960s. "Gerry" as she was called was in her 90's. She spoke with a deep voice, strong but weakened by years of teaching. She was small and frail but her eyes brightened and she was filled with visible energy when she spoke of Mother Caroline. The conversation went something like the following:*

**S. Judy:** "Gerry, can you describe what Mother Caroline looked like?"

**S. Gerry:** "She was tall and stately (pause)... and pretty well-filled out."

**S. Judy:** "Do you remember having a conversation with her?"

**S. Gerry:** "Oh yes! Before we went to the novitiate we had to talk to Mother Caroline alone, like you'd talk to your mother."

**S. Judy:** "Do you remember what you said?"

**S. Gerry:** "I decided to tell Mother Caroline something no one else knew: that ever since I was a child, I could hear out of only one ear. I thought I'd tell Mother Caroline and if she wanted to send me home she could send me home before I went to the novitiate. So I told her."

**S. Judy:** "And what did she say?"

**S. Gerry:** "Mary, that was my name before, Mary, you hear more with one ear than most folks with two. You're O.K. Mother Caroline said 'I'm O.K!'" she said with great emphasis.

**S. Judy:** "Is there anything else you remember?"

**S. Gerry:** "Yes, she told us that when we carry those laundry baskets up the stairs we are to rest on every landing. Candidates, put those baskets down and rest on every landing."

**S. Judy:** "She sounds very understanding and human."

**S. Gerry:** "She was especially good to me as a young sister. My first mission was Louisville, Kentucky and my superior (pause)... was a little stricter. After my first year there I saw Mother Caroline and she asked how I was doing. I was sad and told her that my superior was "stricter" and she said to me: 'Mary, I'm going to give you a good superior.' And she sent Mother Philemon who was a good superior."

**S. Judy:** I could see that she was getting a little tired so I concluded the interview and said: "Thanks Gerry for sharing those memories with me." And as I left her I heard her saying out loud, "And Mother Caroline said 'I'm O.K.' 'I'm O.K.'"