

## Catherine Mary Kelly (1909-1986)

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, she became acquainted with the Congregation through the Enthronement. She entered the novitiate in Paris and made her first profession in 1937. Then she spent some time in Guernsey and later became part of the community in Rennes.

When the Germans occupied France, Sr. Catherine Mary was arrested as a British subject and from December 5, 1940 to January 14, 1942 was interned in two different camps: Besançon and Vittel (Stalag 194). She wrote a report of her experience.

“Account of Internment of Sister Catherine Mary Kelly (At Besançon, from 5th December 1940 till 30th April 1941; At Vittel, from 1st May 1941 till 14th January 1942),” 31 pages mimeographed, “signed: Sister Catherine Mary Kelly, April, 1942.”

Only later was it known how much she suffered as a result of the separation from her community. The report says nothing explicitly. Catherine Mary feels at home in the Eucharist. Here are some extracts:

*I was quite calm near Our Lord and all of a sudden it occurred to me that I should make my Holy Hour... and I said to myself “God knows how long I shall be without being able to pray in a chapel in presence of the Blessed Sacrament.*

*Our Chapel was not large and could not contain the 500 religious that we numbered. There were few seats, and every time I went to mass I had to remain standing ; and could not kneel the place was so dirty and cold.... Before Christmas, we had not the Blessed Sacrament during the day, but we could go to the Chapel when we wished...The Protestants also had their services in the same Chapel...*

*At the beginning of February 1940 His Lordship the Bishop gave us the glad news that the Blessed Sacrament would remain in the Tabernacle all day. What happiness !*

*The Blessed Sacrament was placed on a decorated table ; some drapery was put up behind it and we could sit around the Good Jesus...it was in truth as it was in Bethany – intimacy with Jesus.*

*This (new) chapel was very pretty, but Mass could not be celebrated in it as it was too small, but the Blessed Sacrament was kept in it during the day and Holy Mass was said in the dining-room. Each one went to her place as for dinner, but turned her chair towards the Altar.*

*At seven in the morning we arrived at Paris... I wanted to go at once to Picpus...After bringing Sister Colette to the Little Sisters of the Poor, we arrived at Picpus where, thanks be to God, I could remain three weeks. What joy it was for me to be back in my beloved Congregation and to see our Very Rev. Father and our Very Rev. Mother again! It was so long since I had been able to speak to my superiors.*

Catherine Mary returned to her community in Rennes and then in 1950 to Britain. She died peacefully after a long sickness in Clones, Ireland at the age of 77, “a fervent and dedicated member of the community ; working indefatigably, and always showing those flashes of humor and gaiety which characterized her. She was devoted to her Eucharistic vocation of Adoration and reparation, and whether in the internment camp or in her community gave edification by her acceptance of God’s will and her abandonment to Him.” [M. Colman O’Leary SS.CC. in her obituary.]

There was a similar case in Hawaii but from the other side. After the attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) Sister Gertrude Maria Schroeder ss.cc. of the Pacific Province, who was born in Germany was interned with a Japanese friend. She is still living today in Honolulu.