Doris L. Cooper
“...they listened. And again, I listened and learned.”

Revelations

In her later years, Ma Cooper decided to put into print her many thoughts and feelings about her life’s journey. I was humbled and honored to sit at the end of her bed to write down her words and to later type the draft that would become the book she titled “Revelations.” In the introduction she wrote: “Every encounter that life has to offer falls into either a category that can or cannot be described. I have found that the experiences that life has presented me, up to this point, fall into one or more of the following: those that are tangible (feelings); those that are intangible (thoughts); and those that remain periodically (revelations).” I learned a lot from her and how one should always strive to treat any person you come in contact with in any given situation with dignity and respect, truly a Christian ethic. Doris Lee Purdie Cooper, Doris L. Cooper, “Ma Cooper” .... Thanks for letting me be part of your journey. Love you and miss you much.

As spoken by Oretha B. Pretlow

There is an American colloquialism that goes, “When E. F. Hutton speaks--Everyone listens.” Here at the Basilica, it used to be, “When Doris L. Cooper speaks--Everyone listens.” Whether she was giving an announcement or instructions; reading a verse from scripture, poetry, history, commentary or singing with the choir--Everyone listened. She could turn a simple sentence into a proclamation. Before I actually met her, the words she spoke were always full of wisdom, truth and compassion.

I first started out in ministry at St. Mary as a young adult and it was through this that I actually first met and started working with Mrs. Cooper. She took me under her wings and it wasn’t long before our relationship grew to the point that I affectionately called her “Ma Cooper” and she affectionately called me “Daughter.”

Ma Cooper also served as the funeral coordinator for many years and I soon joined her in helping our parishioners plan the funeral mass and programs for their loved ones. We usually went to the family’s home during those times and she always served the family with grace, prayerful peace and respect. During the Mass, her recitation of the meaning of the use of incense made all present feel the presence of holiness in that place, at that difficult time.

I also went on to assist her in coordinating weddings. Again, even when things seem to be going awry, working with brides and their families, she managed to calmly bring everyone back to the reason they were there. Again they listened. And again, I listened and learned.

After we spent time together planning and coordinating funerals, weddings and other church events, she would calmly say “We got that done. I think I want a Tuna Fish sandwich and a Pepsi from Dumars. I’m treating.” She had a way of adding a quiet sense of humor to any situation.