

Sister Incarnata Gephart, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, April 28, 2016

Starla Martinez, Niece (Read by Janet Mahmudy, Pastoral Services)

My Auntie Sister always bought me books. *Babar the Elephant* was the first book she bought me. When she came to visit my cousins and me, we always received some kind of gift from her. I had red hair and freckles and hated them. She knew this and told me that my hair was for the angels to see me at all times and watch over me and the freckles were a kiss from Jesus. So I learned to love myself and my red hair. The Kingdom of God is getting its own special angel. Please kiss my daddy for me, Auntie Sister.

Anna Anderson, Niece (Read by Janet Mahmudy, Pastoral Services)

When I was a little girl living in Aurora, my aunt would come and visit her sister and her sister's eight children. We had a little white poodle named Pierre that absolutely loved her. When we knew she was coming for a visit we would say "Auntie Sister" is coming. The little dog would wag his tail and bark excitedly knowing his buddy was coming. There are many memories of my Aunt during Christmas holidays, but this was my favorite.

Clarice Doucette, Niece

I was thinking about some of the times when our Auntie Sister would come and visit when we were children and later in life. The one theme of my verbal snapshots is her extreme generosity. She was a woman not only of courage, but of incredible generosity.

One of my earliest memories is of when I was in elementary school. I grew up to be a French and Spanish teacher because I was horrible with numbers. I remember her teaching all about fractions. She came to visit us and I remember on Sunday afternoon my mom pulled her aside and said, "You really need to help her with her math." So she taught me all about common denominators. I've always been thankful for that.

My older brother Raul shared a story when I was talking with him on the phone a couple of days ago. Now he's a math person; he's a math wiz. Apparently he needed some help with phonics and reading back in the day. He told me that she helped him understand that you can add an "e" to a word and make it an entirely different word. He said, "I can remember as clearly as if it were yesterday that she told me I could spell mad—m-a-d—add an 'e' and it becomes 'made.'"

I really remember her extreme generosity and hospitality. I graduated from college and decided to begin my graduate work at the University of Minnesota. I was going from Denver to Minnesota and she insisted that I stay overnight with her in Lincoln, Neb., to visit with her and to break up the trip. I'm sure it meant more to me than it did to her, but I just remember her incredible hospitality when I visited that time. I also remember the gifts that she gave. One of my prize possessions, and I use it faithfully, is the rosary she made for my First Communion. I have several rosaries, but I still pray with it. It's my special, very, very treasured possession.

When our mother was dying, I was fortunate to be able to go out to Reno, Nev., where she was in hospice at home. Auntie Sister was there. She told me then that she thought that one of the roles God had given her was to help her two sisters pass on to God's Kingdom. She was an incredible support to us as we helped our mother be with God. I will never forget that she thought that was one of her true callings. Some of you already heard this story from me yesterday or this morning.

I was really privileged to be able to come just this past December and visit her, although I knew she probably wouldn't recognize who I was. One of the pictures in the back is one I gave to her for a Christmas present. It's a picture of her and our two aunts when they were very young. The precious memory I will leave with is how she had instant recognition of the picture and said with all joy and wonder in her eyes, "The girls! It's the girls!" I said, "Do you know who they are?" She said, "Yes, that's me. That's Dorothy." It was such a gift of the Spirit to be able to be with her. So many of you have said that she was a really, really special person. It is a privilege to be here and share in this celebration of her life.

Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM

I came to know Inky when she was at the Motherhouse in the late 1990s when I came here. She was just beyond the Tea Room on the first floor in a small apartment area which we always called the Professed Wing. She lived there with Sisters Kevin Gallagher, Jean Meyer and Maxine Rummelhart. Hospitality was definitely part of that apartment; they had people in and out and the sisters invited in for meals. What I remember about Inky is that she never would request anything; there was never a need that she had. When she moved from the apartment to Marian Hall, we would find her in the community room in her special chair with her crossword puzzle book in hand and her little afghan over her. She'd be working away, watching whatever would be on TV. When it was time for Mass and a person brought the Eucharist to her, she would always look up with that beautiful smile and say, "Thank you, Love."

Kathleen Hauff, Niece

I've met so many of you already today, so if I repeat myself I'm sorry. I'm Auntie Sister's namesake. Her baptismal name was Kathleen so I'm Kathleen also. One of the sisters said that makes me special. I'm not sure about that and I'm not sure that Auntie Sister would agree that I'm anybody special because she treated all eight of us the same. We used to love for her to come and visit. I was going to tell the dog story also. We thought it was great fun before she got there to tease Pierre and say "Auntie Sister's coming." He would run to the door and bark and wag his tail and wait in anxious excitement. Sometimes my brother Michael, who's a little bit more of a prankster, would do it even when she wasn't coming. We thought that was funny.

About 20 years ago now, she came up to Washington to visit with me, my husband and my two sons over Mother's Day. I had a big dinner for my mother-in-law and for my father's sister, our Aunt Terri, and Auntie Sister. I bought all of the aunts a corsage for Mass and gave her a little present for Mother's Day. She actually teared up a little bit and said, "I've never been honored for Mother's Day before." She was your Sister, but our Auntie Sister and a mother figure to all of us. Thank you for having us. I know you will miss her because you saw her every day. We'll miss her for all the memories we have of her.

David Doucette, Nephew

We grew up in Aurora, Colo., and we went to Catholic school, St. Therese, there. Auntie Sister taught in Boulder. The school in Boulder was pretty nice. She taught fifth and sixth grade science. They always had a lab and they had little animals—gerbils, guppies, snakes, reptiles—all kinds of animals. She always had a gift for us. Whenever we went to Boulder, we end up taking home a guppy or a gerbil or two. They would multiply and we'd end up with a whole house full of gerbils and guppies. We always had exotic animals because of her.

She was very gracious, a very loving person. I didn't know her as well the past few years, but I did know her when she was at Granada Hills, Calif., and went to see her a couple times. I went there when my sons were babies. Just a loving, beautiful lady; I'm blessed that she was my aunt.

Sister Dolores Becker, BVM

Sister taught me in the first grade at Most Holy Redeemer in San Francisco. When I would come to visit I would say, "Sister, this is Joan Becker from Most Holy Redeemer," and I would get the most beautiful smile and she would say, "San Francisco." I'd say, "That's right." I remember that she prepared us for our First Communion. In those days they didn't use unconsecrated hosts; they used Necco candy. Typical of my class, we kept making mistakes at practice so we could get more and more Necco.

When I came here to volunteer one summer a few years ago, she would smile but didn't say anything. I said to her, "I wish you could remember what I did in first grade that made you wash my mouth out with soap." I didn't grow up in a house where bad words were spoken, but maybe I heard it on the playground or maybe I stuck my tongue out at somebody. Anyway, we went into the cloak room where there was a little bathroom and I got my mouth washed out. So when I said that to her, she looked me straight in the eye and burst out laughing.

Sister Julie O'Neill, BVM

Carol Marie mentioned that Inky always had her puzzle books. Until about nine or 10 months ago, the puzzle books of her choice were word searches. She would be sitting in the third floor community room with five or six other sisters who live in that area. When she would find the word, she would not only circle it, but spell it out loud. The rest of us would be having a conversation and all of a sudden "f-a-r-m-e-r" would come from Inky's corner of the room. Sometimes we would be participating at Mass, and one time it was in the middle of the Consecration when she spelled "f-a-r-m-e-r." I thought, *What a wonderful way to pray with God!*

Sister Helen Thompson, BVM

I went to public school in San Francisco until sixth grade when we were supposed to graduate and go to junior high. However, my mother taught in the junior high so I went to Most Holy Redeemer. I had a seventh grade teacher who was somewhat of a holy terror. However, salvation came because I got sent downstairs to S.M. Incarnata's second grade room to do the blackboards. I can say that washing the blackboards in the second grade classroom is probably a very real reason I am here today.

Sister Roberta White, BVM

I'm from Southern California and lived with Sister Incarnata in Granada Hills. After she retired, she came to us and was such a great blessing. She was the science resource teacher. She turned a big closet at the end of the hall into the science lab. The teachers loved her, and so did the students, because she would do any kind of science lesson that they requested from first grade all the way to eighth. The students loved her so much that at recess and lunch times they would ask, "Can we go to the science lab?" Imagine giving up recess and lunch to go to the science lab! She really inspired them in science. She was a great, great person to have on our staff; we loved her very much. On Sundays after Mass she loved to make us a lovely breakfast. She'd cook up eggs and bacon and have the whole big breakfast there.

Sister Catherine Dominick, BVM

Incarnata loved to sing. She knew every word to all the old songs. If you started "Oh, Susanna," she would go through all the verses. She would sit there and sing song after song after song. It was such a delight to hear her sing.

Sister Dolores Becker, BVM

On the day Incarnata was anointed, just before Father got there, an aide told me that Sister has a composition book with every name of every child she every taught. So I thought, *Let me find my name.* We started looking, but the pages that the aide opened were from before I was born. But then, Father came and I didn't get to it until later when I was there for the Ministry of Presence. So I got the book. In her Palmer handwriting, she had beautifully written names alphabetically for each class. I found the names of some of my classmates. I looked down the page and my name was microscopically in pencil. When she was doing it, she missed me so she put it in at the end. Each one of us had our name, our address, phone, birthday, father's name and occupation. That was for *every* child she taught.

Sister Roberta White, BVM

There was a very beautiful time that Inky and I spent together. We were privileged to go along with 22 others on a pilgrimage to Lourdes and Fatima. She loved hills. When we got to Fatima, she said, "You know that the exact spot where Mary appeared is over that hill up there. About five of us went. When we got to the top of the hill, there was another hill and another hill and another hill. By the time we got there and back it was about three miles in the summer heat. However, we did get to the spot where Mary appeared to the three children. She was so happy; it was a wonderful experience.

Sister Kathleen O'Sullivan, BVM

I think I remember Incarnata and Sister Ange Cadigan spending part of the summer at Flathead Lake in Montana. It must have been "9-11" because when they wanted to leave, planes weren't flying, so they thumbed a ride home.