

*Sister Mary Wolfe, BVM*  
*Wake Stories/Reflections*  
*Marian Hall Chapel, May 2, 2014*

**Sister Mary McCauley, BVM**

Mary and I taught sixth grade together for one year out at Our Lady of Loretto in Hempstead, N.Y. We taught this same person from whom I have a letter to read. His name is Bob Salmon and he liked both of his teachers very well. However, we were slightly distinct in our pedagogical approach.

Dear Mary,

Thanks for letting me know of Mary Wolfe's death. Know that my thoughts and prayers are with you as you send Mary Wolfe off to be with Mary Frances Clarke and other BVM saints (I believe there many). You are all in my thoughts and prayers. After I receive the copy of her prayer service and the liturgy for her Mass of Christian Burial, I will set aside some quiet time to think and pray for her.

Mary Wolfe was the last year of the Baltimore Catechism for me. I still remember our drawing maps of each country we studied in our notebooks, and the memorization of countries and capitals . . . often done through repetitious chants. We also memorized all of the prepositions. I also remember being introduced to Peter and the Wolf as part of her music lessons—how apropos with her name being Wolfe, which of course we never knew. Only as I studied New Testament in college and knew the story of Nicodemus that I connected her name to his.

I do not know if Mary Wolfe will have any family at her funeral. If there are any, please let them know that a former student from OLL was quite fond of her, loved her as a teacher, and that she was inspirational in my becoming a social studies teacher.

Fondly, Bob

Actually Bob captures Mary's spirit quite well. And for those of us who lived or taught with Mary, we all knew that whatever she did, she did with great fidelity, great conviction, great determination and great love. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to have known Mary, but in particular to have, in the last few months, been able to spend a good deal of time with her as she sorted, cleaned out and reorganized her room. Each afternoon that I would help her, I had in the back of my mind, "She's cleaning out with a reason and a purpose in mind." Finally one day she told me that she had decided to stop dialysis. Never had I seen such a glow and fullness of peace on Mary's face. That, along with a few other things we did together as teachers, is what I am going to remember.

### **Alicia Harker, Quad Cities**

I met Sister Mary Wolfe at St. Pius; she was with the Legion of Mary as our assistant spiritual director. I have fond memories of her.

Part of what the Legion does is door-to-door evangelization. I was her partner during this time. She was always full of energy. I would say, "Let's not go today because it's raining. Let's not go today because it's too cold." She would say, "I'm going anyway." Then I would go too. I remember one time when there was this terrible dog in front of a house. I said, "Let's not go there." She said, "You don't have to go there. Let's just continue on." I was ready to call it quits, but she just kept going. In the poem "Seek His Face" that was just read, it says "Many a steep hill to climb." We had to tread up this big hill where we evangelized. We would start at the bottom and work our way up to finish at the top. We would always go back again to the residents that we visited, and they looked forward to our visit. They would invite us in and we would pray with them.

Mary taught me how to pray. I would always ask her to pray for my family because we always had a lot of problems. She said, "You know, Alicia, you don't have to ask me. I'm already praying for your family." I could always rely on Sister Mary to be praying for us. Those prayers did get answered. She prayed for my son's back during his eight-year imprisonment. I know it was from her prayers that he is out. Thank you, Sister Mary Wolfe, for the prayers for my family. Prayers are very powerful. I had a son who recently died. I could feel the prayers from the community. We love you. God bless.

### **Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM**

I lived with Mary in Memphis. She was the librarian at Memphis Catholic HS and I was the principal at Fr. Bertrand ES. Even though we lived together for about three years, I can't say that I knew Mary nor did I really appreciate her beauty.

But having been here for a few months and having the opportunity to share a meal with her in Marian Hall, I began to see her kindness and care and concern and how she encouraged the sisters who were eating with her. I think it was the week before Easter when she whispered to me that she had decided to discontinue dialysis after Easter.

During that last week after Easter, I had the chance to visit her in her room. She was so peaceful and she was so excited and looked forward to "waking up in the arms of Jesus." That was her saying. As I was leaving her room, I went to give her a hug and she asked me for my blessing. My heart dropped to my toes. I had to control myself first, but I gave her a blessing and she gave me a hug and promised to pray for all of us. I am so grateful for her peace, especially in her last months.

### **Sister Angele Lutgen, BVM**

I first met Mary when I was in Clarksdale which follows up on Irene's story. Mary was the librarian in Memphis, but in Clarksdale, which was a very poor and small mission, we had a grade school and a high school. The requirement was to have a library for a high school.

Mary would come on the bus on weekends and take care of all the work at our library. So she was the official librarian for Clarksdale as well as Memphis. I am grateful for having that initial opportunity to get to know her. I also lived with Mary for four years in Rock Island. I was so

enamored of the energy that she had. She tutored adults who were learning English. She went to Holy Hours and choir. She was up early in the morning and going strong. She was a wonderful example of fidelity to all the causes she embraced. God bless you, Mary.

### **Sister Anne Buckley, BVM**

As everybody knows, Mary was a big hugger. If I didn't see her for several days, she always made up for those days and would give four or five or six hugs. I would just like to thank Mary for all those times of CPR and resuscitation.

### **Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM**

Memphis seems to be a highlight here, and it was for all of us who lived there. She was at the high school in the library and she was very distressed when I came up the steps. I was the curriculum person from the diocesan school office. I walked up to her to say hello; I really wasn't coming for the library. She said, "You've got to do something about this! Joan, you have to do something. This has gone on too long!" I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Those boys. They are under the steps now; I know it." And sure enough they were; I saw them when I came. She said, "They are howling like a pack of wolves." I burst into laughter, I'm sorry to say. I said, "Mary, they're boys." She said, "I don't care if they are boys. They shouldn't do that." I said, "Your name is Wolfe. I would do it if they didn't." She said, "You're supposed to be helping here." Then I went home and I heard the howl again. The other part of that story is that she had many personalities. One summer, Clarke was providing entertainment for various groups of BVMs. There was a clown appearing on the stage dressed up perfectly. She burst into laughter and song and was going to town. I finally turned to a person next to me and said, "Who is that?" "It's Mary Wolfe." "Mary Wolfe!" She did have a lot of sparkle and it came out when she was here, when you met her and the hugs went on. She was a deliciously lovely lady. She just didn't like the wolf call.

### **Marge Zimmer, Marian Hall Nurse**

I joined with Mary through all the dialysis and the things she has chosen to do. I truly believe that she chose it so that she could be of service to people, not for her own personal ramifications. I know that she brought tremendous joy to the dialysis unit. They all came to get their hug every time she went, even if they weren't her nurse. And they brought their baby pictures to show Mary. She brought a lot of joy to the dialysis unit and to the people here. One day Dr. Ringold asked her if she was tired. She said, "You know, I've been tired most of my life. I can't wait for eternal rest. I'm ready for it." She was a wonderful gal who spread a lot of joy. They nicknamed her Sister Mary Hugs and they always looked forward to seeing her.

### **Sister Kathleen Mullin, BVM**

Mary was rather eclectic. You heard from Alicia about her participation from St. Pius in the Legion of Mary. She also went there for Adoration every week. Her GED and ESL programs were at First Lutheran in Moline. She went to Sacred Heart in Moline for Adoration one day a week and she was in the Friday Bible study group with us for about sixteen years. That group can't be here today, but they wanted me to represent them. Mary used to say quite honestly to the members of the group, "You inspire and edify me." Her home parish was Sacred Heart in Rock Island where she was a lector and sang in the choir and convinced people to collect cans for her. So in her retirement years, she participated in numerous settings and in the activities offered in those places.

### **Eva Cook, Quad Cities**

I'm from St. Ambrose Church, but I have been going to St. Anthony's nursing home now for about six years. I met Sister Mary Wolfe at Trinity Hospital. I was a Eucharistic minister there and Sister Mary Wolfe was visiting someone. I gave Communion to the lady she was visiting and offered Communion to Sister Mary Wolfe. She said, "No, I've been to Mass today." When I left the room, she followed me out and said, "Do you do this anywhere else?" I said, "No. I would consider it, but where would that be?" She said, "St. Anthony's nursing home. You would have to say the rosary too." I said, "I've never said the rosary in front of anyone else." She said, "But you would be able to do that." "Oh, Sister," I said. "I don't know." She said, "Oh yes, you can do that; anybody can do that. I'd be able to help you out and the Lord will show you just what to do and He'll give you all the right words to say." Sister was a "fisher of men." I was not the only one she got to go there. There are four of us in the front row here that went to St. Anthony's nursing home to be Eucharistic ministers and to pray the rosary. I was going there on Thursday when she said to me, "Would you consider going a different day?" "Sure, Sister, what day would you like me to go?" "Friday." "Sure, I'll go then." There was a resident who was priest there and I was scared to death to say the rosary in front of him. He turned out to be one of my best friends. Sister was always there to give encouragement and show you how to do things. I learned so many things because of her. As someone mentioned, she was Sister Hugs. She was always so gracious and ready to teach everybody everything. She was always so considerate of everyone. She has been my very best friend. She never failed to tell me what a wonderful day it was when we met at the hospital. I, too, am so appreciative for the day I met Sister Mary Wolfe. When she left, she said, "I guess you know that you have to take over." As you can see I follow her rules even today. She said, "You have to wear white to my funeral." I look out and see that I'm the odd ball out since I'm almost the only one who is wearing white. But Sister Mary Wolfe, I'm still following your advice. Thank you for being my friend and teaching all that you know. I'm so glad I came to Trinity Hospital that day and I'm so glad that we met. I still appreciate all your prayers. Thank you all for your prayers as well.