

**Ann Regina Dobel, BVM**  
**Wake Stories/Reflections**  
**Marian Hall Chapel, Sept. 6, 2018**

**Janet Frey, Cousin** (*Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM*)

My mother was Ellen Marie Dobel, cousin of Catherine Dobel (Sister Ann Regina). I grew up hearing stories how the Dobel families would get together on Sundays for dinner, sing-a-longs, and conversation. It all sounded wonderful - cousins who were as close as sisters. The cousins grew up and went into professions and new families, but the bond had been established. Forty some years ago, my parents retired and found Arizona. Guess who else they found? Working with a parish, or I should say running the parish, in Phoenix, they found Sister Ann Regina and Sister James Rita. The cousins were back together there. Maybe there weren't sing-a-longs, but there were certainly dinners and stories. Ann Regina always had stories and she enjoyed telling them as much as the world enjoyed hearing them. When speaking to my siblings about Catherine's life and death, every one of the five of us used the word joyful. Even in her later days when my brother John and I stopped to visit and she wasn't quite sure who we were, Catherine was smiling and joyful that we were there. That was always her spirit. She passed it on to all whom she met. We will carry it with us forever. How fortunate, how joyful!

**Sister Diane Forster, BVM**

We heard from many of Ann Regina's former students, both from Mount St. Gertrude Academy in Boulder and St. Paul HS in San Francisco. Some of the stories were lengthy; some of the memories were very brief. I have excerpts from the many pages we received.

"Sister Ann Regina was always there for me and guided me through the many aspects of those years away from home, making me feel at home at Mount St. Gertrude. She was very good to me. She was so prim and proper, and dignified. She walked so gracefully; we all thought she would make a beautiful model."

Many former students used these words to describe Ann Regina: "wise, practical, firm yet fair with a loving smile, kind, exceptionally compassionate, caring, inspiring, a shining example for us all of how to be a strong woman even in the 1960s."

One of the women came to visit Ann Regina at Mount Carmel. She said, "Although she was in her 90s, she was the same wonderful person as when she oversaw Mount St. Gertrude. My lasting memory of her will always be her hands tucked into her habit sleeves and ready, wide smile with a twinkle in her eyes."

Another woman wrote, "Ann Regina once chastised me for holding a boy's hand at a dance because she said, 'Holding hands should not occur until the fifth date.'"

Another student had received what seemed at the time a devastating personal medical diagnosis while she was a boarder at Mount St. Gertrude. Later, shortly after she graduated, she was forced by circumstances to be on her own. In each of those instances, she was consoled and

helped by Ann Regina. She wrote, “Her great kindness to me in those moments of terrible difficulty I will never forget.”

“She was a pillar of strength and a gentle heart who always seemed to know how to put our adolescence crises into proper perspective and embodied a spirit of joy.”

“She was one of the people who dragged us, often kicking and screaming, out of adolescence and into adulthood. She didn’t get angry, but explained the choices involved and encouraged us to look at the result we hoped we would get.”

“I heard from her every year after Mount St. Gertrude and will miss her cheerful notes each Christmas with news about Mount Carmel. Go with God, Ann Regina, which you have faithfully done all your life. You did make a difference.”

### **Greg Dixon, Nephew**

I am one of four nephews. I have three brothers who wish they could be here today, but due to various reasons, they couldn’t make it. My oldest brother Jim is in Florida. My older brother Don lives in Kansas City. Keep him in your prayers; he suffers from Parkinson’s and can’t get out much. My younger brother Terry lives in Dallas and is tending to some family issues.

Sister Ann Regina was always Aunt Kay to me. In the early years, we didn’t see Aunt Kay or Aunt Mary very often. I do remember when I was young that I was a mess in speaking. I had a terrible stutter. My r’s were w’s. Aunt Kay and Aunt Mary spent the weekend, maybe a whole week, at my grandparents’ house. They did nothing the whole time but work with me on speaking to get past the stuttering. They did a pretty good job. I think it shows what great teachers they were in just about everything they did. When our kids were young, they were big sports fans. Aunt Mary and Aunt Kay were stationed in Phoenix. I think the nuns in that convent ate a lot of Frosted Flakes because we were never short of Tony the Tiger baseballs. That was a standard Christmas present. We would get Tony the Tiger baseballs and we used every one of them.

Aunt Kay had several favorite sayings. One of them was “dearie.” You walk into the room and hear, “Hello, dearie, how are you today?” Another one was “God love you.” We heard that quite frequently. There was particular phrase that we found to be quite interesting. It was her use of the word “interesting.” We always thought she was using it because she was interested in what we were saying. Many years later, we found out that she often used it when she may not totally agree with what you were saying, but she was not going to openly take exception to it. Now we understand about when we were talking and hear this “Interesting.”

My brother Jim had this story. He had unique perceptiveness because he lived with my grandparents in Kansas City while attending Rutgers College. He saw my grandfather’s Irish sense of humor up close and in person. He commented that Aunt Kay had the exact same dry, witty, Irish sense of humor. Jim was the contact person for Aunt Kay for the past several years. He would call her two or three times a month and keep us updated on what was happening in Aunt Kay’s world. He also worked a lot with Sister (Mary Ellen) Zimmermann. Sister Zimmermann was a saint in keeping us posted on everything.

Another characteristic of Aunt Kay, she loved meals, she loved sharing meals. She was especially fond of pizza, Chinese from HyVee, and, being a good daughter of a meatpacker, she liked a good piece of steak. She connected with our boys through sports. She was a huge Phoenix Suns fan in the NBA. She was a huge Arizona Diamond Backs fan. She was a very welcoming person. When someone entered the room, she would be one of the first to welcome, “Hello, dearie” and introduce herself. She would just make you feel special and welcomed. A common theme that I heard so far was that she was a happy person. Both she and Aunt Mary were probably the happiest people we have ever known. The room was always full of laughter, kindness and love. They were two very amazing people. She loved being a BVM. She was so proud of Mount Carmel. She was so proud of you sisters. She spoke endlessly in positive terms about all of you. When we came here, she was so excited to introduce you to us. Earlier, I was standing in the back of the chapel. Many of you came up to me and told me stories. She was really an amazing person. I want to thank the BVMs who gave her an incredible purpose to life. She had very challenging teaching assignments. She shared some of those with us. I learned about a few of them for the first time today. I want to thank Sister Zimmermann and Sister Cathy (Wottreng) for organizing this celebration today. This is truly a celebration. People offered us condolences, but this not a condolence deal. This is a celebration because she had an incredible life and impacted so many people in a positive way. We could only be so lucky. Thank you, sisters so very much.

#### **Lori Ritz, Director, Office of Life & Mission**

I lived with Ann Regina at St. Agnes for just a short time. As you all know, Ann Regina was joyful, cheerful and happy all the time, even at 5 o'clock in the morning. Now that was not bad for me who was just as cheery at 5 am as well. In fact, it was a great start to my day. One thing that Ann Regina quickly learned about me was that each morning I ironed what I was going to wear for the day. It didn't matter if it was a shirt, sweater, pants. She found that interesting and we laughed about it many times. She thought I should do my ironing, put it in my closet and then take it out. I told her it would wrinkle in there. We even discussed one day that when I died, would she please make sure my clothes were ironed before they buried me. I was living at St. Agnes when I left the community and then moved into my apartment. Ann Regina and Mary were the first to visit with an ironing board and iron in hand – my housewarming present. She said she knew I could not go to work the following day unless I ironed what I wore! Thanks, Ann Regina, for always brightening the days.

#### **Sister Peggy Geraghty, BVM**

I lived with Ann Regina twice, very different times and places, but both were real gifts to me. The first time was my second mission at Mount St. Gertrude's in Boulder where Ann Regina was a superior and principal. She was such a delight. Can you imagine a young sister going somewhere where the superior was more fun than any of her other friends! She always had such a positive outlook, such a good sense of humor, such love, such welcome for everyone. I'm going to talk about living with her later when she was in a more pastoral position, but even at Mount St. Gertrude's, the compassion she showed for her students especially moving. I remember one particular incident and she let me be part of it. The mother of one of our freshmen shot and killed her father. The mother was being held in the city jail in downtown Boulder. Ann Regina asked me to go with her to visit this woman in jail. She brought such compassion, love

and understanding to that woman who was so distressed. Later in the trial, it was revealed that the woman had had some reason to commit this crime. The important thing was that Ann Regina who was just so much fun and everything seemed so positive in her life, when it came to being pastoral, she couldn't be beat. She had such a compassionate understanding for suffering and was able to extend that to that woman who was in such grief. Twenty-five years later, I lived with her and Mary at St. Agnes in Phoenix. That was a treasure to me. They were both very active in the parish. Ann Regina, as it was mentioned, ran the parish. She was so pastoral there. Her love for friends, family and everyone who crossed her path couldn't be denied. Of all the adjectives that you have heard today, and I don't have any new ones, joy was certainly the most outstanding one, and welcoming. She had such a big heart; such wide arms to welcome everyone came into her life. It was a privilege to have been part of her life.

### **Sister Judy Callahan, BVM**

This story gives me great embarrassment because it has bothered me my whole life. When I was young, would you believe this, I was a little bit brash and tactless. Some would say I still am. It was the time of the first-time Regionals and I was a bit of a challenge. Shortly after the election, I was down in the basement in the laundry when Ann Regina came down. All of us were trying to figure what persons had what jobs and our responsibilities to them. That's the backdrop. Ann Regina says, "Dearie, how is your spiritual life going?" I answered without a second of hesitation, "Just fine, thank you. How's yours?" Ann Regina, as all of you have mentioned, had such wisdom and maturity, I'm sure she never remembered it past that day. Still, it's a little nail in my heart that I was so brash. I respect her leadership and all the gifts she has shared in her life.

### **Sister Eileen Healy, BVM**

This story jumps to the relocation of the Motherhouse residents from 2005 to 2007. Ann Regina was in the Hotel Julien and loved it. However, there was a man down the hall who, to use an old-fashioned word, was smitten with her. He would knock on her door to talk with her. Ann Regina was always gracious to him. She always found a reason why she wasn't inviting him in. We teased her a lot about the man down the hall. When it was time to return, she very graciously came home and left her boyfriend behind her. I often think of Patty DeVries, Housekeeping, who was so good to those sisters who came up here to come to Mass, eat the noon meal and visit the sisters. She put reclining chairs in a couple of the turrets so that the sisters could put their feet up while waiting for their ride. Ann Regina was always in the second floor turret after lunch with her feet up, very comfortably waiting for her ride home. Sometimes those things get lost in the shuffle. For me, Patty DeVries and the housekeeping staff, who were so good to the sisters, are connected with Ann Regina.

### **Sister Mary Ellen Zimmermann, BVM**

When I first knew Ann Regina, I was in high school and had her for one class. I recall that she was always surround by girls when we had some free time. We all loved to talk with her. She was such a good hostess and listener when I'm sure at times she wished she could be someplace other than listening to these high school girls. She was always generous that way throughout her life. She was pleasant with people no matter what. Thank you, Ann Regina.

**Sister Georgeann Quinlan, BVM**

I just moved to Dubuque after 50 years in Colorado, which started when Ann Regina was at Mount St. Gertrude. They closed the school the year I came. It was hard for me to leave Des Moines; I loved being there. I really didn't want to leave, but I went to Gertie's. Ann Regina was just delightful. We had so many things happen with the girls. Some of the girls were wonderful girls from Mexico who were rich and wanted a good education. Some were farm children. Some were day students. However, some girls were sent there because their parents couldn't handle them. Ann Regina had a wonderful way of handling the things that they did. I would come to tell her how funny the kids were when they played tricks on me in the dorm. I slept in the same dorm with the freshmen. They would play tricks on me and I would be laughing at it because I thought they were so funny. I'm not sure the other nuns thought it was good to be laughing about it. I love Ann Regina and her sister Mary who was our Scholastic mistress for a while. Thank you, Ann Regina, for your love and your joy.

**Sister Margaret Mary Cosgrove, BVM**

I knew both Ann Regina and Mary. My best, most favorite memory is Ann Regina's absolute love and devotion during the last years of Mary's life. Ann Regina traveled with Mary on her journey through dementia. She was always there to take care of Mary, in the best sense of the word, and to love her and to be with her. That devotion is a model of how to love someone and be the best person for the other.