



Wake Stories of Muriel McCarthy, BVM (Baptist)
Marian Hall Chapel, Nov. 6, 2018

Joan Kelly, Niece (*Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM*)

Aunt Muriel, Auntie Mu (moo) to us, was a teacher, jokester, judge, jury and the most encouraging person in our lives. She always told us we could accomplish anything if we set our minds to it. While she might have been perceived as stern and matter of fact (which she was), for the most part she was always happy, smiling and laughing at our silliness. She was filled with laughter as she kept us on an even keel reminding us of what was really important. We were so happy to have her finally assigned to a parish in Northern California after so many years teaching in Southern California. Her sister Dolores was especially happy, even though they sometimes argued like sisters do! They were so alike really, although both of them would deny it. We didn't go anywhere when we were little so I was excited to learn that I was going to take a train to Los Angeles from San Francisco with my grandmother (Muriel's mother) to visit Aunt Muriel, Sister Mary Baptist then. We went to celebrate an anniversary for Aunt Muriel. It was the first time I ever met her. She was a whirlwind of energy and I was truly impressed. We were taken all over LA, and when we left, she gave me rosary beads that I still have.

So many stories. Each of these has a lot of meat and bones, but the highlights are. The socks received as Christmas presents or the dollars in so neatly wrapped Christmas envelopes. The babysitting episodes when jumping on beds was met with a stare! She was proud to be Jennifer's godmother -and the feeling was mutual; they had special outings in the City with just the two of them. There were the car rides for family gatherings. We especially loved the rides to Santa Rosa on sunny Thanksgiving days when we would leave San Francisco but detour off the freeway just to see the autumn colors. There were the games we played with Aunt Muriel as the final judge and jury. The arguments over the right answer ended when Auntie Mu judged which answer was correct. No further questions! She corrected our grammar *all the time*, which just simply made us better. She showed up 45 minutes early so often that we ended up just telling her the event started an hour later than it did. There were the bus trips to Reno with her sister Dolores and even though she didn't gamble or drink she had as much fun as anyone else. She loved learning. After she no longer taught in schools, she took classes at the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco. She loved teaching us in ways that would lead us to discover the answer. I don't think she ever outright gave us one answer. There were the rosary bead gifts at our First Holy Communions. There was the time when a very, very distant down-on-her-luck relative went into the office of St. Paul's, totally out of the blue, and asked for Aunt Muriel. When she was finally allowed to go into the classroom, after the children were gone for the day, she proceeded to inform Aunt Muriel that we were all related to none other than Raquel Welch! That story never got old. Finally, most of all, her generosity with her time, lending a hand to us and to those in her community however she could is what stands out. We loved to be around her and we are sure she loved being around us. She was the constant reminder of what is important: help those who need it; surround yourself with people you love; enjoy the conversation and company; and have a good laugh. Thank you again for all that the BVM community has done for us.

Sister Catherine Osimo, CSC

Sister Muriel taught me in eighth grade at St. Anne's, Santa Ana, Calif., in 1958-59. I kept in touch with her all these years and visited her whenever I was in California. She was a great encouragement to me as a "young sister" after I entered the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1963. I was saddened in recent years when I was no longer able to communicate with her via mail. As Sister Mary Baptist, she was strict, disciplined, and focused as an

educator. She was a model of quiet, sure strength and spirituality. Providentially, I inquired about her only yesterday through your archivist, only to learn of sister's death today. She always challenged her students by saying, "I'm from Missouri. Show me!" It was years before I learned she was actually from San Francisco. She certainly "showed" me God's smile and love. Now God shows her and shines back.

Sister Patricia Rogers, BVM (*Read by Sister Julie O'Neill, BVM*)

I was fortunate to have had Muriel as my first superior at Assumption in East Los Angeles. This was her first term as superior and I was fresh out of the Scholasticate. Needless to say, we were both very nervous. Muriel ran a tight ship, but was always kind and understanding. She helped me a great deal in those first two years on the missions. When I think of her, "straight-laced" always comes to mind. However, when her sister Dolores came to visit, she told Muriel to let us watch TV when we wanted to. Kindness won out and Muriel allowed the TV to be turned on. When she was in charge of the tearoom here at Mount Carmel, there was no way a plate, cup or silverware could be misplaced. There probably was not a cupboard door or drawer that was not well marked. "A place for everything, and everything in its place." I will always remember Muriel as kind, fair and understanding.

Sister Julie O'Neill, BVM

On the day Muriel died, I called an 82-year-old retired priest whom she taught in third and fourth grade at St. Bernard's in Los Angeles. We had a delightful conversation. It was as if he had just stepped out of the classroom. He told me so many stories about things she did and said, kind of what Sister Pat said – she was straight-laced, had high expectations, and the children loved her to pieces.

The family will have a memorial said at St. Paul's in San Francisco in a couple of weeks. They decided that was the route to go instead of having any of them come here to Dubuque. All of the materials from this service will be sent to San Francisco for them to use.

Muriel and I lived together several times. One of the phrases she used a lot was "It's not fair." She didn't mean that it was not fair to her. She meant it was not fair to somebody else. Example number one: At St. Vincent High School, Petaluma, Calif., she was teaching freshman theology and occasionally would give long-range projects. She said, "It's just not fair. Some people will go home the first night the project is given and they will work very diligently and the end result no matter how hard they try, will not be as good as those with more natural abilities who wait until the last minute to do the work. It's just not fair." Another example: It's already been mentioned that she visited senior citizens in a high-rise in San Francisco in St. Thomas More Parish. The people at that time who lived in the high-rise were quite wealthy. One of them, Rose, had a son who was a lawyer in Los Angeles. He came very seldom; he seemed to care very little. Muriel was concerned that Rose was really failing, so one day she called the son and said, "It would really be good if you would come to visit your mother." His response was, "She has a lot of money. Let her hire a companion." "It's just not fair" was Muriel's response. At the same high-rise, there was another senior citizen; her name was also Rose. She was as cantankerous as can be, very hard to get along with. Nobody could satisfy her. She had a son; he was wonderful. He had several children he would bring on Saturdays. They would try to get Rose to play cards. They would draw pictures. No matter how hard they tried, they just couldn't please her. So Muriel would say "It's not fair. This Rose has a cantankerous son. That Rose is cantankerous herself and has a wonderful son. It's just not fair." When Muriel began to lose memory, her ability to walk, her ability to understand the Eucharist and receive it daily, I found myself thinking, it's just not fair. Yet, she was on her own journey. In the prayers of the faithful in the funeral mass is the phrase, "She was on her final mysterious years." They were very final mysterious years.

Muriel died on Friday. I called my sister in San Francisco to tell her. My sister shared that she had just come back from a trip to Los Angeles and had misplaced her ID packet and presumed it was on the plane. She was frantic about finding it and said she was going to pray to Muriel. About an hour later, she called back and said that United Airlines had called. The packet had been found wedged down between the seats in the airplane. I think Muriel has joined St. Anthony's lost and found department. If you are someone who prays to St. Anthony for those things you lose, you might add Muriel. Finally, Eleanor Roosevelt has a quote, "Some people come into our

lives and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never, ever the same.” She will ever remember us and we, I’m sure, will never forget her.

Patricia Cook, Sister of Sister Loretta Prutsman, BVM *(Read by Sister Kate Keating, BVM)*

Sister Muriel was an important person in my life from the beginning. My sister, Loretta, was in high school when I was born. My family belonged to St. Bernard’s parish in LA where Muriel lived and taught. Loretta and my older brother Joe had her for a teacher in grade school and she became a very good friend to our mother. I was about two weeks old when Loretta took me to the convent to be blessed by the nuns. As the story goes, Muriel took me, placed me on the altar in the chapel. The nuns and Loretta encircled me and prayed over me. So began my life of love and caring from BVMs.

When I was five, Loretta left home for Dubuque and her new life. Muriel was able to give us updates about Loretta when she was not able to communicate with us. Mom and I visited Muriel every other month in Santa Ana, Calif. Being with her was fun and comforting at the same time. Mom wanted to be a Catholic. Muriel visited with her and got her through all she needed to be a full member of the Catholic Church. Muriel did not very discouraged when it took a 20-year journey for it to happen. She and Mom were very good friends. They celebrated the fulfillment of Mom’s dream in 1969. Keeping in touch with her over the years helped me through many tough times and gave me the ability to share the joys too. Earlier this year, my oldest daughter invited me to go on a trip with her family to a friend’s wedding in Iowa. We made it a road trip – three adults and 10-year-old twins. My only request for the trip was to stop at Mount Carmel to which the answer was a resounding “Yes!” On July 5, we were blessed to spend several hours with our BVM family. I was especially blessed to spend some time with Muriel. Kate and I left Dorothy and Sarah with the parents and the kids and went up to the third floor. To my surprise, she was sitting up in the common area. I talked with her, gently held her hand and told her how much she meant to me. I gave her a kiss and thanked her for all she had done for my mom, Loretta and me. I know now, as I knew then, she heard and understood me and she felt my love. I will be think of all of you during the wake and funeral. I will be there in spirit. I love you all.

Sister Mary Anne Bradish, BVM

I knew Muriel on my first mission. I was a 21-year-old, first-time teacher with 67 first-grades. She taught eighth grade. It was amusing part of my life. At the same time, she taught me to drive a station wagon. The BVMs were wearing the box habit. We belonged to the Los Angeles Archdiocese at the time and not broken down into the Orange Diocese, so we had a long ride to go to meetings in Los Angeles. One day I was selected to drive with Muriel (Mary Baptist) sitting next to me. As we were driving home she said, “Leslie, you can turn your head when you are driving.” Obviously, I had to learn many things and she was very kind in helping me. Fast forward to my 50th anniversary. I asked Muriel if she would join my table at the Atrium at Clarke University. When we were at St. Paul’s at a BVM meeting, we didn’t know the territory, so with some time off, the two of us hopped a bus and traveled all the way around town and got off at the same stop where we started. We saw the city. Muriel was a joy and I look forward to meeting her again in heaven.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I knew Muriel just very briefly during her later years ministering in San Francisco when I was teaching at St. Paul HS. Coming back here over three years ago and reflecting on how often we, or maybe it’s me, have said, “God, what are you doing? What’s in your plan when she and so many others have lingered so long?” I have come to the conclusion that it’s not about the sister who can no longer walk, dance, talk or enter into life fully as we imagine it. It’s about us and our willingness and desire to be there. I am especially grateful for our wonderful staff and all the care – hour by hour, day by day, year by year – they gave to Muriel and to so many others. I think it’s about us learning to love better.

Sister Eileen Healey, BVM

When Muriel was teaching at St. Paul, I had the honor of being the principal. For the two of three years that we worked together, she was the kind of person that any principal would just die to have on the faculty. I cannot

remember a parent or a child coming to complain. Yes, as it's been said, she was a little straight-laced and strict. However, the kids knew what she expected of them, felt honored that she expected so much and they did it. There was never any kind of complaint about her strictness because she was dead fair. She was the kind of teacher a principal loves to have on the faculty.

Sister Diane Forster, BVM

We thank everyone for sharing your stories and memories of Muriel this morning. To conclude our sharing, I will read a prayer as found in Muriel's prayer book and was the shorter prayer on the back of the worship aid.

*Prayer does not change things;
It changes people and they change things.*

My Daily Prayer

Heavenly Father, walk with me today and grant that I may hear your footsteps,
and gladly follow where they lead.

Talk with me today and grant that I may hear your tender voice, and quicken to its
counsel.

Stay with me today and grant that I may feel your gentle presence in all I do or
say and think.

Be my strength when I weaken, my courage, when I fear.

Help me to know that it is your hand holding mine through all the minutes of all
hours this day.

And when night falls down, grant that I may know that I am gathered to your
Sacred Heart to sleep in love and peace. Amen.