



Wake Stories of Mary Crimmin, BVM (Agnes)

Marian Hall Chapel, Jan. 28, 2019

Sheila Sullivan, Line Dancing Class, Roberta Kuhn Center, Mount Carmel *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

Mary stood in the row behind me and always had a happy smile and was so positive. I won't be in town for the memorial, but I wanted to share this memory.

Sister Adaire Lassonde, SSND *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

I lived with Mary for four years when we were both pastoral ministers at St. Joseph Parish in New Hope, Minn. I loved Mary's humor; it was usually self-deprecating. Always trying to overcome fears and always trying to do the right thing, one day she said to me, "Adaire, you'd be proud of me. I went in the 'out' door at Kmart today." Then she did that sweet little chuckle of hers. She loved to sing. When Kathleen, a Franciscan living with us, came home, we would do three-part harmony that would take us through the cleaning up after supper together. She also had a stubborn streak. It got her into arguments, but it also got her through some tough times. Mary was very generous. You would be able to count on her giving time and attention to some task that you needed help on – a very good community member. She was easy to love and I smile every time I think of her.

Kathleen Bohn Keane, Friend *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

I (a Rochester Franciscan at the time) lived and worked as a pastoral minister with Mary at St. Joseph's Parish, along with Adair, an SSND. We had a small, but mighty community those four years. A couple memories that I have are the following: Mary's ability to break into a song and dance, i.e. "Molly Malone," "In Dublin's fair city, where the girls are so pretty," and we jumped into a three-part harmony that sounded like the Andrews Sisters. After long days of ministering with people in their homes, hospitals, nursing homes, neighborhood gatherings, wakes, funerals and burials, we appreciated hamming it up a bit! Besides that, it sounded great!! We had several songs we could do. Something else that we did in our free time was to attend regularly the Israeli folk dance sessions at a ballroom in Minneapolis. The movement and steps were such a mellow, prayerful source of inspiration that helped to rejuvenate us for our work. I also recall Mary bringing home our Christmas tree one year, which was really quite a pathetic looking object. I don't remember where she got it, but she said, "Don't worry! We will decorate it and it will be beautiful." To this day I think of that statement every time I decorate our Christmas tree. Mary definitely helped me to appreciate the simple, unexpected, even broken parts of life and what a treasure they are or turn out to be. She is a dear friend and I miss her, however, I am quite sure, knowing Mary, her spirit will pop up in my life, helping to keep me on track. Love you, Mary Crimmin, spelled C-r-i-double m-i-n!

Sister Judith Callahan, BVM

I was just leaving Kankakee when Mary Crimmin came to Kankakee, but I still had connections with the three BVMs there. This is the story of the three Hail Marys. There were three Marys in the house. There was Mary Crimmin, the tall one who didn't speak Spanish. There was the short one, Mary Kelliher, who did speak Spanish, and the other short one, Mary McElmeel, who didn't speak Spanish. When the Hispanics would call the house and say, "Sister Mary, por favor," a description was needed to know which one of the three was to come to the phone. The beautiful thing about the three of them together was that all of them came to serve primarily the Hispanic community without any extensive experience or knowledge of the language, especially Mary McElmeel

and Mary Crimmin. However, they found ways to serve the people, work with them, communicate with them and help them in many, many situations. I say to the three Marys, "Hail Mary, gracious por sus servicio."

Sister Donard Collins, BVM

Mary had worked in the Motherhouse in administration. She left a file there that was very interesting. Included was the job description for anyone who worked at the Motherhouse. I only recall a couple of requirements. One was "You must have the strength of a stevedore in order to move trunks from place to place." A second one was, "You must be strong and be able to at least go up four flights of stairs from the basement to the fourth floor in case of an emergency." It had to be done in no more than 20 seconds. Another skill was the need to know how to be an elevator expert because, as the elevator door close, you prayed that it would open level with the floor and not between floors because that would be a problem. Mary had such a tremendous sense of humor. Sometimes we agreed when we looked at that list that there was a little more truth than fiction.

Sister Carolyn Farrell, BVM

My comments have to do with our relationship in the Set of 1953. We were the last group before the Scholasticate program began, so we went to summer school at Clarke College and other campuses across the United States in full force. Mary and I were at Clarke and that cemented the relationship we built in the Novitiate, even though we weren't supposed to be talking. In the Novitiate, we called her "God's Little Lamb." At Clarke, she was my best coach in teaching modern math in grade school. Later in life, Mary and I lived together on Alta Vista Street with Barbara Kutchera. We moved to Rush Street near St. Columbkille's into a four-apartment project. It was my idea at the time because I was a Regional, but Mary was very supportive. Later, she, too, became a Regional. Mary and I lived, worked, prayed, and played together many times through those years. This is a story about my self-development. I was sharing with Mary, but it speaks to both of us. I said, "Mary, I pray every day to go slowly." Mary said, "I pray every day to step it up."

Susan (Susy) Hall, Niece

Thank you all for coming. Our family appreciates it. I have three letters from Mary's sisters.

Frances Lyne, Sister (*Read by Susan Hall, Niece & Frances' daughter*)

My name is Fran Lyne, otherwise known as "Didgie." I am the oldest of the Crimmin children. My sister Mary and I grew up together. My mother dressed us in the same outfits so we looked like twins just about everywhere we went. We played with our Shirley Temple dolls together and took them for many a walk. We had fun growing up and every year we would go on a little vacation.

Mary was a good basketball player. We were both on the Teen Club basketball team. She was a guard and was known for giving the hip to someone sending them into a wall. We won a lot of games that way. We both went to The Immaculata High School. When I graduated, I became a secretary and she told me that she thought she might like to be a nun. So when she graduated, she went off to Dubuque. We would go to visit her whenever we could.

I married and started a family of my own. Mary would come to visit when she was able and she even took some of my kids to camp one summer. They had a grand time. One time when I had surgery, Mary offered to come and help take care of the kids. At that time, we had ten children. Well, that lasted two days and she told me she was asked to go help someone at some school so she had to leave.

I will miss my sister. I know she is up in heaven having a great time with the others in the family and I hope she will watch over me until I see her again.

Susan Hall, Niece

Just to interject our own story, when my mother had surgery, my sister remembers Aunt Mary coming and singing happily in the basement.

Loretta Wermes, Sister *(Read by Susan Hall, Niece)*

I am Mary Crimmin's sister Loretta. Mary left home to join the BVMs when I was 12 years old. So I don't feel I have as many memories made with her as I could have had if she lived with us longer. One of my favorite memories is going out with her for walks. I could always count on a stop at Dairy Maids, the local ice cream parlor, or at least an ice cream cone from the corner drug store.

As a child, I loved going to visit her in Dubuque with the rest of the family. I always felt like she lived in a huge castle and was treated like a queen until I found out that she had a job to do as a "low duster." This meant she had to dust all the stairs in the place, including the space between the rungs of the railing. I didn't think it was so elegant to live there any longer. Again, because of her love for ice cream, Dad would take us for a treat. I still looked up to her for her power in the ranks of the siblings.

After she lived in Casper, Wyo., for a long time, my relationship with Mary was much more mature, although we still both shared our love for ice cream. My home was beginning to fill up with children and I would ask her advice on their education. She said she didn't go to preschool, so we both decided they were geniuses and were ready to go right to first grade.

In those days, Mary usually had to travel with a companion so we met many wonderful nuns through her visits. I could see Mary had many friends and they all seemed to be close to her as her birth sisters. If you asked for prayers from the community, you knew that a powerful force was in the works.

Mary and I became very close again over the past ten years. When she was able to spend some time away from work, and yes, she took on many jobs even after she officially retired, we enjoyed our time together. When she came to visit, we would take a trip to a natural garden, a museum, or a downtown play. Sometimes we would just enjoy sitting and watching the TV and discussing whatever struck us at the moment. Chocolate sundaes always ended the evenings.

We will all miss Mary very much, but somehow it makes dying more comforting to know such a kind and gentle spirit is ready to welcome us to our final home.

Marcella (Marcy) Morgan, Sister *(Read by Susan Hall, Niece)*

You went away so suddenly
We did not say goodbye
But sisters can't be partial
Precious memories never die.

There are many things I remember. I remember when you went to Dubuque. It broke my heart; I was seven at the time. The nuns said I could stay to be a low duster, but then I would miss Mom and Dad, so I declined the offer.

I always looked forward to your visits during the years and attending family celebrations with you. You loved to sing and we would harmonize all the time, our favorite song being "You Are My Sunshine." Everyone who ever attended home holiday celebrations remembers you, me, Didgie and Loretta singing in the kitchen while we were doing the dishes.

The whole family will never forget our stay at the "Barn" on your property in Dubuque. So many stories we all could tell from that great experience – car keys lost and had to be made; snoring causing people to sleep in their cars; hosing ourselves off with the garden hose because we were so hot, and on and on. We had a lot of laughs that weekend; what a great idea you had to plan that.

We had fun dancing at all the weddings of family members. I was glad you had the opportunity to do line dancing at home because I know how much you loved it so. You also loved singing in the choir in Dubuque and looked forward to singing at Easter and Christmas.

The best idea we, as sisters, every came up with was a yearly get away together for all of us – fun times and lots of laughs during those excursions.

Thanks to Sister Carolyn Farrell, who would drop you off on Randall Road on her way to Chicago, we got to spend a few days together at my house each year. As we get older, we realized how important family is and we made the best of those days. You and I went rock picking in my neighborhood, looking for rocks to landscape the front of the house and my garden in back. We are talking huge rocks. We laughed so hard because some of the ones we wanted we couldn't even pick up together and get in the trunk. We ended every evening with a bowl of ice cream, our favorite thing to do. My friends who you met in my neighborhood are very sad at your passing because they all remember my "sweet" sister Mary.

We had lots of phone conversations and I would always feel so good after talking to you because you always boosted my spirits. You would tell me how much you enjoyed the Vietnamese Sisters and how much you worried about them. You really worried about each and every one of them, especially when they got their driver's license. I said, "Now you got the opportunity to know what it feels like to be a mom, that's fantastic!" She loved you all (Vietnamese Sisters) dearly.

Mary and I decided long ago there is no purgatory so I know you did the fast track to heaven. I truly believe you suffered enough here on earth and I am truly sorry I wasn't there to hold your hand and comfort you. I wish I could rewind the clock and could have hugged you one more time before you had to go.

In my heart, I'll hold you close
And there you shall remain
Until my time has come on earth
When we shall meet again.

Susan Hall, Niece

I personally would like to say a little something about my aunt. We, as family members, didn't see her just as a nun; we saw her as so much more. We loved her dearly. We loved going to the convents where she stayed and where we would get to stay with her. We loved to come visit here and meet all of you. You were such a very important part of her life. We got to see that and it was so wonderful. Aunt Mary was always such happy person and she gave us all so much joy. She was a lot like our grandfather; she reminded us so much of him. Many of us have gone through different things in our lives. Aunt Mary was always there cheering us on and giving us hope and guidance. We will miss her very much. Thank you all for coming to celebrate her life.

Sister Margaret Sannasardo, BVM

Mary and I graduated from The Immaculata together. We were in many classes together. Mary would sit behind me or ahead of me, especially in math classes. I got some good answers from Mary. I didn't call it cheating and neither did she. When we were seniors in high school, we were called up and the sister teaching us said, "You were supposed to go down to the principal and tell her why you wanted to enter the BVMs." Mary and I looked at each other and thought, *What? How does she know?* It was probably March or April. As we were leaving the classroom, I said to Mary, "What are you going to say?" "I don't know. What are you going to say?" We laughed and giggled as we walked down to the principal's office. I think the principal was SM Naola Brennan. Mary said, "I'll say it's the will of God." I said, "That sounds good. I'll say it's the will of God, too." In our set, Mary was the Ugly Duckling. Remember when we put on those plays? Mary was so dear and so much fun. It always lightens my heart to think about Mary both here and there.

Sister Diane Rapozo, BVM

I first met Mary when I was missioned to St. Pius in Chicago in the 1970s. Since then, I have lived with Mary two additional times, both here in Dubuque. Mary went home with me on a home visit to the island of Kauai. I have quite a few brothers there. One of them said to Mary, "Would you like to climb a mountain?" "A mountain?" He asked her to come look out the door at the mountain about a half-mile from us. She said, "Sure, I'll try it." We went, but there was no trail on this mountain. My brother said, "I'm going to take you straight up." However, he didn't tell us that it was filled with this lantana, bushes that have thorns. As we made our way, Mary kept asking, "Are we almost there?" Finally, my brother said, "Ah, you're coming to the easy part." We never found the easy part, but we made it to the very top. At the top of the mountain is a big hole. We sat in that hole as the breeze blew through. We forgot all about our scratches. He took us down a different way, which was a little bit better. I called my brother Kenny and told him what was happening with Mary. I told him, "I'm not sure she's going to make it." He said, "Tell her to get better. Come back to Kauai and I will carry her up the mountain." In these past couple of years, it has been a little rough for Mary. Her sight was not very good. Because of this, she had to drop out of some things. Mary, you have reached the top of the mountain again, this time without scratches. We truly will miss you.

Liem, IHM, Vietnamese Sister

I came here last winter and lived with Sister Mary, Ba Mary, more than one year. She was helpful and a happy person. I remember when I came here; there was a problem with the heat. It was really cold. She was very worried and asked if I was OK and if it was warm enough. She found for me more blankets to make me warmer. She could not sleep and asked us, "Are you OK?" "Yes, I'm OK." But she still worried about us. When we go to school, she waits at home to ask, "Do you need help?" Sometimes we didn't ask for help, but she would come and ask us. She would wait until we finished our work. After that, she would go to sleep. I remember that she had a funny song. I remember was something like her slogan. When we studied late and she would sleep a little bit, she would wake up and say, "Good morning!" When we talk about the turkey sitting outside, she said, "Isn't it beautiful?" We said, "It's ugly!"

Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM

I came to know Mary better when we shared the responsibility of community representative (now BVM Life Facilitator) at Mount Carmel. She definitely was one of the finest note takers I have ever witnessed. Her Palmer method was absolutely perfect. She had everything down and in place. If you missed anything or needed to be refreshed, all you had to do was say, "Mary, would you take out your notes and help me know what was said?" She could do it line for line. As was mentioned, Mary had to deal with macular degeneration. One day I came into the office in the afternoon, she had on a visor that would shade some of the light from the window. I said, "Mary, you now are a croupier." She looked up, smiled and said, "Yeah, I'm going to work at the casino the next time." She was a delight to work with; her sense of humor was absolutely wonderful. At times when things got a little tense, she knew just how to even it out. Thanks, Mary. I hope my sister JoAnn as welcomed you home with open arms.

Tuyen, IHM, Vietnamese Sister

I would like to share my feelings. First, I thought of Mary was a gift to me, and now her leaving us as a gift, but it is hard. I think a lot about Ba Mary and Ba Marion (Murphy). I feel that Ba Mary came to us as a gift. I would like to thank Sister Mary for coming with us as a grandmother, a mom and a friend. The two things, gifts, I received from her in the last days: I found her when she had fallen and I found her when she had died in her room. It is hard for me but I think that it's God's gift to me and I will never forget her. Please keep her in your prayers and I will keep her in my prayers. Thank you very much.