



Sharing of Memories of Dolores M. (Jeanne Michele) Kramer, BVM
Caritas Studio, July 31, 2020

Mary Lois Wegenknecht, sister

Dolores was blessed to be able to do what she wanted to do with her life—that is, being a Sister of Charity. She loved everything about her life—the people she lived with, the work she did, and her strong prayer life. It was a blessing to know she was praying for us every day. Dolores was my oldest sister. She was the oldest child in our family and I was the youngest—she was 13 years older than me. Although there were many years between us, the number of years did not stop us from loving each other very much. I thank God every morning and every evening for placing me in my family. I will miss Dolores very much, in fact, I already do.

Richard Ford, brother-in-law (*Margaret Joan Ford, Dolores' sister, died June 18, 2019.*)

We remember how much Dolores loved books. She especially loved giving books so when a package arrived at your door, you knew it was yet another book carefully selected and recommended by her. As a result we have some wonderful books that we likely wouldn't have even known about if it wasn't for Dolores. We also remember having some interesting discussions about current events especially related to how decisions being made on a national scale were affecting different groups of people and all Americans in general. Happily we were in general agreement on most of those.

We included some daisies in our offering of flowers as they have a real significance for our family. Dolores' mother, Marguerite, used to reflect, in her later years, that she often thought if she had it do over again, she would "pick more daisies" on her life journey. We kind of adopted that saying in our family and shared it often, hence, daisies are special to us and they find their way into our funeral flowers. Also her mother's maiden name was Keniery and her family has always cherished the "Irish" connection. It's quite common for us to sing "When Irish eyes are smiling" at the end of many of the family funeral Masses.

So, Dolores, when we open a new book, see a daisy in bloom, or hear an Irish song, we'll be thinking of you and praying for you. May God bless you and give you peace!

Tom Ford, nephew

In 2014 my 12-year old daughter was diagnosed with leukemia. In those early dark days following diagnosis, we received words of support from many friends, relatives, and strangers alike. One very special message came from my Aunt Dolores. She said that she had shared our situation with her BVM sisters and that daily prayers were being said for my daughter and our family. In the weeks and months that followed, Aunt Dolores was constantly checking in on how we were all doing. She wrote the most beautiful prayer just for us that I recited many times, including the day of my daughter's bone marrow transplant.

Today my daughter is doing well, preparing to start college in just a few short weeks. I have so many to thank for that—doctors, nurses, friends, family, and so many others. At the very top of that list are those that gave me my foundation of faith in God. Aunt Dolores was such an important part of that foundation for me. When my mother, her sister, passed away this past year, Dolores again reached out to our family to offer support even through her own grief. She shared a book of prayers with me on a recent visit to help me cope with the most significant loss in

my life. Aunt Dolores will be sadly missed but the faith foundation that she helped instill in me will be with me forever.

Charles Kramer, nephew

My best memories of Sister Dolores were probably the many Christmas gatherings we would have that she would attend with all the Webers and occasionally the Fords and Allens—and of course Grandma Kramer. I think she really enjoyed the commotion of a full house and the singing and presents. One time in particular Santa Claus stopped by with a few presents and gave everyone a hearty “Ho, ho, ho.” To this day we still don't know who that was. And Sister would always give gifts to everyone. Once she gave me an art set which I still cherish and have in my study to this day. And then off to Midnight Mass.

I think it was just her way with a kind word or encouragement in every aspect of life that I will remember most. Of course her emphasis on education, that was truly inspiring. I know she'll be in heaven so I hope she can put in a good word for me. We will miss you, Sister Dolores. God bless.

Kathy Castle, niece

Sister Dolores was my aunt—my mom's sister. I was always so proud to have someone in our family who had dedicated themselves so thoroughly and completely to God. Growing up, she always had a way of making me feel special and seen. She identified strongly with my love of books, often commenting that I reminded her of herself. She was always so interested in and encouraging all of us kids. With me, she was especially interested in and proud of my scholarly pursuits, having read my dissertation and commenting on and asking questions about some areas of my research. She was one of the only members of my family to take an interest in this very important part of my life and because of that I always felt a special connection to her. She had a way of making me feel as if I was special to her. Her ability to do that was an incredible gift, one that I think is often overlooked that is so incredibly important.

When we lost my mom, she sent a beautiful book and called each of us kids to share memories and comfort one another as we managed the loss of my mom, her sister. That phone call was incredibly comforting and something I'll always remember. I brought my family up to visit Aunt Dolores in Dubuque a couple of years ago and I'm so glad that my children had the ability to sit down and talk with her for a little while. That visit meant a lot to them and being able to connect with her in that way was a real gift for all of us. We will miss Aunt Dolores terribly though we are so glad and comforted knowing that she has gone home to be with God the Father and is resting in peace with my mom (her sister) and her brother (my Uncle Pat).

Pete, Lori, Nicholas, and Aidan Kramer, nephew and family

Sister Dolores Kramer was very special to us and very respected in the Pat Kramer household. She had many stories to share and we were all thankful for those stories. Her experiences and relationship with God were amazing. We wish her peace and know that she is up in heaven with her brother, my dad, Pat, and her sister, my Aunt Joan. She will be missed dearly and we will keep her in our prayers. Thanks, Sister (Aunt) Dolores for all you have done for the Kramer family. We will definitely miss reading your wonderful Christmas card every year!

Mary Kramer, niece

My fondest memory of Sister Dolores was her deep passion for reading the Jesuits and many other authors and how she shared her favorite books with my mom and me over the years. She also drew or water colored custom artwork for each niece and nephew and we appreciated the love put into each piece. She will be dearly missed.

Sara Kramer Winke, niece

My fondest memories of my Aunt Dolores are at all of our Christmas Eve celebrations growing up. She always made the evening more magical with her gifts and laughter. She was also very talented as she wrote poetry and drew many gorgeous pictures over the years. I have both framed in my home today and they will always remind me of her beautiful spirit. Additionally, she always wrote me such nice long letters describing her life and duties

and inquiring about my boys and husband. I truly loved receiving them and really appreciated all her prayers and support over the years. She will be greatly missed!

Joellen McCarthy, BVM

During my time of working at Mount Carmel, I knew that Dolores was genuinely interested in what was happening in my life. I experienced her unfailing support for my work in leadership and her delight in learning what brought life to me: for example, walking to and from Mount Carmel and my apartment, what I was reading, or what I enjoyed cooking. My interactions with her were always rewarding as I experienced Dolores' great interest in both what was happening in the BVM congregation as well as in the world at large. Now, reflecting upon her death, I realize the strength I received from both her peace-filled presence and her belief in me.

Margaret Molloy Nelle

She one fabulous woman! She touched my heart the moment I met her. She gifted me with a book when Ray died. The book is titled *Healing After Loss*. She inspired me to read, read, read. I am so grateful.

Kathleen Antol, BVM

Dolores was my Mount Carmel prayer partner for a while, seems like four or five years now. Prior to this, I didn't know her at all. Not sure our paths ever crossed until I got that little card in the mail telling me she was the BVM at Mount Carmel who was to pray for me. Dolores really took that seriously and reached out to me immediately. She always assured me that she prayed for me every morning. Needless to say, I was very appreciative of this and often prayed for her. Before her eyesight began to fail she would write me cards and letters every once in a while and even call me. I would do the same. And whenever I was in Dubuque I would visit with her in Caritas. We would just chat. She always wanted to know how I was and what I was doing and wanted to hear all.

Her failing eyesight was a real cross for her to bear that she seemed to just accept because she said to me, "It is what it is. It's what God has sent me." I always sensed, no, I *knew* Dolores was a deeply spiritual, deeply contemplative woman. I'm very glad our lives finally crossed after so many, many years. She is, no doubt, in Heaven praying for me now! And I certainly can use her prayer! So thank you, Dolores! May you rest in the loving arms and peace of God!

Margaret Sannasardo, BVM

I'll always remember Dolores for her kind and comforting words to me when my mom, brother, and sister died. She was especially aware of how close I was to my sister Rosie and sent cards of condolence regularly for several months. She had an understanding heart and a creative spirit. Dolores, rest in Peace.

Carol Spiegel, BVM

Years ago when she shared in a newsletter about her time at the Jesuit Spirituality Centre in Guelph, Ontario, I realized that Dolores took her spiritual life seriously. As I got to know her better, it was clear that she also had great joy in living and sharing her love of Christ. One time I was in a group where someone was talking about a new book on religious life that had just come out. Not only did Dolores know about that book, she already had it and was organizing a group to discuss it. Now Dolores is free to gather with those who have gone before us and wholeheartedly enjoy the loving face of God.

Irene Lukefahr, BVM

Many BVMs may remember the Phase 2 workshops which Dolores facilitated at Mundelein College in the early 1970s. They provided wonderful opportunities to gather with many of our sisters and to hear well-known speakers update us on theology, church issues, and religious life. I always left those weekends feeling renewed in mind and soul.

A few years ago I shared with Dolores that I was going to make a retreat at the Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wis., for the first time. Dolores' eyes lit up and she shared that for many years, she offered spiritual direction for those making retreats at Oshkosh. She gave glowing reports about the beauty and spirit of the retreat house.

Whenever I visited with Dolores either in her room or in the Caritas Dining Room, she was always ready to share the latest book she was reading or asked what book I was reading. One of her favorite books was Richard Rohr's *The Universal Christ*. How delighted she must be to see with her own eyes the Christ she loved so intimately.

Nancy McCarville, associate and former BVM

Whenever I visit Mount Carmel, my list of people to see is unending so I am glad that I did chat with Dolores this past March. She always had a warm welcome, a beautiful smile, and a listening ear. I would share the latest of my activities in Waterloo, her hometown. She loved to recall things about her years at Our Lady of Victory School and in the St. John's Parish of her youth. It is no secret that she was a reader, often sending me home with a book or a title that I would need to find. Always interested in what I was thinking and doing, Dolores inspired me with the spirit of her convictions. I am grateful for my time with Dolores.

Charalin Simon, nurse, Mount Carmel Bluffs

Like many of the sisters, Dolores had encouraging words. She had a good quote hanging on the wall by her recliner: *What seizes you will decide how you spend your time, what you read, who you are with.* "God wants to have a relationship with you," Dolores reminded me. She encouraged me to stay close to the Lord Jesus Christ. She said, "Every time you read that to me, it sounds a little more important. Having a loving relationship with God is most important." I told her that I was going to compose a song with that quote. She said she was looking forward to hearing it. I was planning to work on it this August during my home vacation. I guess she will hear it in heaven. Dolores, thank you for all your encouragement.

Diane Forster, BVM

I lived with Dolores both in Des Moines at St. Joseph Academy, and in Kansas City at Regis-O'Hara. I remember how Dolores loved teaching high school religion. I found it a challenge in those years in the 1970s. I recall an evening conference for parents that included a presentation about religious education, and one parent arriving, appearing quite distressed, with a student's worksheet in hand—he disapproved and questioned its content. The worksheet was one that Dolores used, and I so admired her calm and clear explanation of its content. The parent went home also calm, satisfied, and reassured.

Dolores' desire for her own spiritual growth, and her concern for spiritual growth and understanding for students and sisters and lay persons—I think of it as each person's search for interior peace—led her to involvement in retreat work and spiritual direction. Her own eagerness to experience a 30-day retreat, and her great anticipation of that time, was an example, or maybe simply amazing, to others who heard her talk about it. Her work in organizing weekends of renewal and on-going formation with very capable speakers and leaders, as Irene has mentioned, was a wonderful service and opportunity for sisters who participated.