

Words of Remembrance — Sr. Rose Mary Cauley, GNSH — June 3, 2017

“All I ask of you is forever to remember me, as loving you.” Today we gather to remember and thank God for an exceptional woman. Born Rose Mary Cauley, and also known to us as Sr. Mary DeMontfort, Sister Rose Mary, “Aunt Rose” and Rosie. A woman who touched countless lives and made the world a much better place during her time with us.

We Grey Nuns share the loss that Rosie’s family and friends feel so deeply. Rosie was our sister and friend, and her life as a Grey Nun blessed, strengthened and challenged each of us to live our vocation to the fullest.

Before Rosie became a sister, she was nurtured in the Cauley family where her love of God and neighbor took root. When Rosie entered the Grey Nuns she brought the strong faith and family values of her close-knit Irish family. She didn’t leave her family, she just made it bigger!

As a faithful Grey Nun of the Sacred Heart for 62 years, Rosie lived St. Marguerite’s D’Youville’s spirit of loving service with her whole being. Warmth, care, love, generosity and gratitude radiated from her. She believed that each of us is called to serve and she was there for anyone who needed her, at any time. Was it just a coincidence that she was born on December 23rd, on the anniversary St. Marguerite’s death, 165 years later?

Rosie’s greatest joy was in bringing people together. She did this in so many settings: at Providence Community, Catholic Charities, Renaissance Campus, at family celebrations and the numerous dinners, dances and parties that included people from all corners of her life.

When Rosie got a group together, whether 3 or 300, Jesus was there in the midst and Christian community was at its best. At Providence Community, people from all walks of life — and all parts of the world — lived and served together. There were no distinctions: professionals, students, ex-offenders, the young, the old, the differently-abled, along with members of the Cauley-Keenan-Hurley clan, worked side by side to create a loving, supportive home where people with disabilities could flourish. For 21 years PC was *home* for Tracy, Tom, Stanley, Mary Beth and Theresa, and *home away from home* for so many of us.

Providence Community was founded to be a place of celebration and reconciliation. Celebration of God’s love, honoring the Christ who lived in the other, and reconciliation modeled on God’s infinite mercy.

Celebrations were the hallmark of Providence Community. Holidays, whether religious, patriotic or native to Hungary, Japan, Peru, or other parts of the globe, were celebrated with a party, special foods, stories and song, and these occasions always began with prayer and often included a Mass. Birthdays were celebrated with great care. Stanley liked horses, and one year, a life-sized white horse magically appeared at the front door of 318 Breckenridge St. during Stan’s birthday party on a cold January night. No one knew how the horse got there

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from his home in front of the liquor store – must have been the elves of Providence Community at work.

Rosie loved to go places, and the residents, especially Theresa, were her willing partners. Trips to Joe's house at the beach, the Fatima Shrine, Philadelphia or McDonald's were fun outings and often contained an adventure of some kind. Mary Beth shared a story that was typical: Rosie had taken some of her people to the Grey Nun Motherhouse in Philadelphia and then they went on to NYC to visit Sr. Caroline, an early house member. While in New York, Rosie left the headlights on and the car battery died. She struck up a conversation with a man who was passing by, and soon a jump was provided and a new friend was made.

Another time, Rosie and the gang arrived for an anticipated boat ride on the Excalibur. After getting everyone down the long dock, Rosie learned that there had been a mix-up; the boat was full and they would not be able to go aboard. Nonplussed, Rosie announced: "We'll have a picnic right here." She went to a nearby stand and returned with hot dogs and hamburgers, the boat ride was forgotten, and the group enjoyed their time by the water.

When you came to help at Providence Community, Rosie would find just the right job for you. Cleaning the refrigerator, doing dishes or mopping a floor are never work when you are surrounded with love and laughter. Providence Community served far beyond its own walls. We volunteers gained as much as those we came to serve.

The spirit of love and inclusion allowed each of us to let our guard down and bask in the love of Jesus. Rosie had a way of making each person feel loved and special. When you were with Rosie, you had her full attention. And what a gift that is in today's world!

Rosie never sought the limelight. She had no pretenses; she spoke the truth *to everyone* with kindness and respect and held her ground when she needed to. She had to put out her share of fires — and often used humor to redirect others when they were cranky. After defusing the immediate situation, she engaged those involved to apologize and make peace with each other.

To say that Rosie "worked" was to miss the meaning of her service. Rosie lived her faith wholeheartedly and invited others into the dance of love that she danced with Jesus for her 80 years. She had a sure sense of God's abundant love, and like St. Marguerite, she placed her trust in Divine Providence and lived her life in the sure knowledge that God would provide for his people. For her, God was abundant life and love, and there was always enough time, energy and resources to share this wonderful gift with others.

Rosie had a special love for those who travelled the hard road in life, the little people whose voices and needs go unheard and unheeded. After several years of teaching in Atlanta and Buffalo, Rosie answered God's call and volunteered to serve in Lima, Peru with other Grey Nuns in the early 70's.

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The sisters worked with Norbertine priests in a school that served a thousand students. In addition to teaching two sessions of school each day, the sisters helped young women to go to night school. Rosie drove them to school and helped with tutoring. One day Rosie was evidently in a hurry and got a speeding ticket. This got her the nickname “The Roadrunner” from the priests. Typically, Rosie threw herself into this ministry with her whole heart and made lasting friendships among the Peruvian people.

Upon returning from Peru, Rosie changed course to pursue a graduate degree in Special Education and Rehab Counseling. While studying in Syracuse, she lived in a L’Arche house. L’Arche means “The Ark;” like Noah’s ark, it is a home for everyone.

At L’Arche, Rosie experienced the type of community that she longed to create for others. This dream eventually took shape as Providence Community. This was my first experience of Christian community and it was life-changing. Seeing Rosie interact with those she served was the best religious formation that anyone could have. Knowing Rosie and being immersed in the communities she created were blessings beyond measure.

Rosie headed the Office of Pastoral Ministry for People with Disabilities through Catholic Charities for 15 years. This “office” was in reality a one-woman effort, but that one woman was a powerhouse of energy and prayer who got things done. Did someone need a refrigerator? Rosie knew someone who had one to pass along and she also knew a couple of homeless men who would move it. For many years, Rosie organized “Faith and Sharing Retreats” and the Victorious Missionaries where people with disabilities and others joined for prayer, socializing and fun. Who remembers **Towel Bingo**?

Rosie also coordinated a summer camp for adults with disabilities, called “**Caring Love.**” Doesn’t that say it all? For a week, the campers and numerous volunteers enjoyed a week of summer fun on the bluffs above Lake Erie in Dunkirk. The volunteers included Joe Cauley, nieces Moira and Colleen and her sons, Ryan, Nathan and Eddie, who delighted in pushing wheelchairs and doing whatever else was needed. Rosie knew each camper personally; she knew their stories and their struggles and she welcomed each one with genuine affection.

Camp allowed those who were differently-abled to enjoy the pleasures most of us take for granted. I will never forget the joy on the face of a young man who had Cerebral Palsy as he floated on a tube in the swimming pool. The high point of camp was the dance on the last night. Campers who used wheelchairs delighted in being rocked and twirled around by their helpers.

One evening the whole camp was together around the campfire, celebrating Christmas in July. Someone observed that camp was “Heaven on Earth.” And it truly was.

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In each of these endeavors, Rosie worked with others who shared her passion for adults with special needs. Deacon Bill Willis, Joan Cookfair, Jim and Terry Mudd, Tony and Lisa Kozlowski, Brian and Mary O'Harron and Sr. Anne Marie Striegl are some of the many, many people who believed in the mission and enriched our lives. Rosie's family members were totally on board and you were always willing to open your homes, your hearts and sometimes your wallets!

Rosie cared deeply for her family. Despite her many commitments, she stayed close to family throughout her life as a Grey Nun. She was there when family needed her and she always kept you in her heart and her prayers.

In 2007, Rosie and Sr. Diane Bardol attended the European Peace University in Vienna, Austria. With 45 students from 29 countries, the two nuns were the "grandmothers" of the group and they entered fully into making peacemaking and non-violence even more their way of life.

In her later years, Rosie served at Renaissance Campus. She was officially there as kitchen manager – but in typical Rosie fashion, she befriended the young people, giving a listening ear and support. Sr. Ellie Martinez shared the story of a young girl who was feeling depressed because her family had failed to visit. Rosie put her arm around the girl and said, "Come to the kitchen with me and we will be family together and make cookies." Rosie also conducted a weekly spirituality group with the adolescents, feeding souls as well as bodies.

Rosie faced her illness with dignity and grace. She taught us what it means to *live in Christ* and what it means to *die in Christ*. I last saw her in January. Despite being in pain and having difficulty breathing, she welcomed me into her apartment and we visited. Actually, Rosie did 90 percent of the talking. She remained engaged in the lives of her family and her Grey Nun sisters despite her diminishing health.

Rosie cherished her visit to Joan and the family in Rose Hill last fall, and the many family members who visited at the Lafayette Redeemer brought her much joy.

Rosie knew that God was calling her home, and she accepted that final dance with grace. A few months before she passed away, she wrote to family and friends: "With help from Hospice and Grey Nun friends, I am able to be calm and peaceful. Mostly I am grateful to be able to let the grace that God is giving me unfold. I am aware of your love and kindness to me and to each other. I ask God to bless each of you with an awareness of how much God loves you, so that for whatever you face in life, you will be strong and know that you are loved."

Rosie, we love you, we will always remember you, and we rejoice that you are now at home with our loving God.

Presented by Sr. Barbara Schiavoni, GNSH