

**SISTER ALICE PATRICIA HARVEY**  
**August 5, 1914 – March 29, 2008**



On learning that my dear friend Sister Alice Patricia was dying, I tried to express her significance to some co-workers in Ohio who do not know her. “I would like to age with the same spirit Alice showed me in the past 10 years or more,” I heard myself conclude. But it is more complete to say that Alice is for me a mentor in living life fully, with commitment and zest, in prayer and compassion and friendship.

Statistics provide a skeleton of the life story of Margaret Ellen Harvey, aka Sister Alice Patricia, but it is the stories that will illustrate her heart and spirit, her relationships—divine and human, and her gift for living fully.

Her roots in family and parish were put down in Latrobe, in Holy Family Parish, and as one of seven children of Thomas and Alice Harvey. At 93, she outlived not only her parents but also Fr. James, Joseph, Leonard, Loretta, Alice and Mary Gertrude. But family connections were important to Alice and she, likewise, to her nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. Letters and calls, outings and celebrations with family members brightened her days. She always shared photos and stories of those important people and their visits. She continued, as well, to stay in touch with the family of Sister Mary T. Schmidt, her dear friend; she tracked their lives with a caring heart.

Nursing was, in Alice’s words, “my forte for the past 49 years, with bedside care and then supervision in a hospital, later instructing student nurses and then administering a nursing school; finally, working as executive director of the Visiting Nurse Association of Western Westmoreland County.” She earned both Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in nursing with study at Catholic University and Boston College. Sister Alice Patricia nursed at Seton Hill (Sisters’ Infirmary), at Providence Hospital (Beaver Falls) and Pittsburgh Hospital (East Liberty). She taught in their respective Schools of Nursing, and administered the Beaver Falls school for five years. She then provided for in-home care for thousands of patients from New Kensington to Export. In it all, she applied her skills to assure that healing was available and care, excellent.

When retirement from the VNA closed the nursing chapters of her ministry, she opened several others: seeking food and funds for the Food Bank of Westmoreland County and working in the Greensburg Area Public Library, assisting at DePaul Center and on the first House Council at Caritas Christi. In these volunteer positions, she demonstrated the same heart, commitment, and eagerness to enhance the lives of people, seen and unseen, who stood in need.

Honors and recognitions included the Tribute Dinner (February 1983) from VNA upon her retirement after 11 years as Executive Director, and the Spirit Community Award from the Westmoreland County Food Bank as she concluded nine years of vital volunteer service and advocacy.

But what of the stories I mentioned earlier? I think first of friendships and their importance to her. I came to know Alice by meeting her and Mary Schmidt as they walked at Seton Hill and across the road toward Assumption Hall. That premier

friendship shaped Alice's life as it enriched Mary's. I observed Alice's close connections with members of her group and sisters with whom she shared community at Seton Hill for nearly 20 years. And I know firsthand of her ability to forge rich and lasting relationships with people 20, 30, 40 and 51 years younger than she with apparent ease and genuine mutuality. The women from the library remained important to Alice. Their frequent visits and their readiness to provide quality reading material at Caritas Christi attest to her value to them. And I recall Alice's pleasure when Dr. O'Brien and her large family frequently came to join us for Sunday Mass and visit with her. Like Mother Seton, Alice was always ready for interpersonal connection that went far below the surface and lasted well beyond one's in-person exchange. She provided support, occasional probing, encouragement, love and inspiration to her friends of all ages.

One of Alice's beauties was her spirituality. It was evident in each encounter with her. It appears in every article about her now in her file. For Alice, "Sister of Charity: A Life Long Process of Becoming" was not the title of a document but a personal description. Her eagerness to grow and learn and deepen showed through our many conversations about prayer and God. At age 90, she sought a spiritual director, to companion her in this new stage of her journey with God! She was serious about the *life* aspect of spiritual life.

Engagement in life certainly describes her approach, as well. In the Caritas Christi community no less than earlier at Seton Hill, New Kensington, East Liberty and Beaver Falls, she entered into life with zest. Learning, taking in a concert, enjoying Marymount and Ocean City vacations, discussing books, playing cards, initiating celebrations, heading out for ice cream—Alice was up for it. And a delightful toast penned by Mary Schmidt on the occasion of Alice's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday details the spirit of adventure with which she traveled "from Greece to Alps to Timbuktu." During the years when her VNA work overlapped her life at Seton Hill, she shared stories and experiences with such clarity that, according to Mary, "it was like a window being opened on a whole new vista—a special human scene that does not ordinarily lie in sight of our Seton Hill windows." Through Alice's recounting of experiences, her table companions shared vicariously in the lives and challenges of families, a dying child, the dedicated nursing staff. As serial volunteer, Alice even served on the 2001 Elections Committee, and she continued to visit and pray with sisters at Caritas Christi until a complex of health problems in the past five years slowed her down and sapped her own strength and indefatigable spirit.

Tonight as we reflect on Sister Alice Patricia's life and spirit, I think we can say that her desire has come full circle. In her letter to Mother Rose Genevieve on September 13, 1938, the 24 year old expressed her desire ". . . to continue in my holy vocation and with God's help strive more earnestly each day to attain the much desired goal—union with God." Through nearly 70 subsequent years, she strove for that union. Alice, may you rejoice now "in the wide, waiting arms of the Lord" and in a union that knows no barriers, only love.

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection  
Sister Barbara Einloth  
April 1, 2008*