

## **“My Story of Sister Alice Patricia Harvey”**

by Sister Carole Blazina

I met Sister Alice Patricia in the early 1980's. I was a new registered nurse and a new member of the community. Sister Alice was nearing the end of her nursing career and had lived as a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill for many years. She made interested and concerned inquiry about me: where I did my nursing education; what I liked best about nursing; what was it like being a novice of one. And she told me of her early years in the community and stories of nursing with many other sisters at Pittsburgh and Providence Hospitals. I know she worried about me over the years and kept informed about where I was working and living.

Sister Alice shared in my struggles and joys of being a “group of one” and a nurse among few others in the community. We weren't “friends” who spent lots of time together, but when we were together at area and conference meetings, or jubilees, or other community events there were always a few minutes to talk and time for a hug. She encouraged me and supported me during the years of part time study to obtain my Nurse Practitioner. I think one of the greatest gifts she shared in the early years of our relationship was her ability to ask about my ministry and listen to the stories from the lens of a nurse. Yes, there was always concern for the wellbeing of my patients and empathy for their situations...more significant to me was her ability to hear and comment on the challenge to the nurse – to this nurse – to be a skilled professional and a loving disciple of Jesus.

When I came back to Greensburg to reopen the novitiate at Marian Hall, Sister Alice was living at Caritas. Her keen interest and concern was as present as ever. She worried with me about my being “out of nursing” for a time while getting things in place at the novitiate. And she rejoiced with me later when I was free to seek part time nurse practitioner work in addition to initial formation. Again she was eager to hear of my practice and the patients I worked with. She also began to talk about the future, her future and our future. We would chat about dreams and hopes and she would speak of getting adjusted to not having “a real job.”

Several years ago Sister Alice was describing her envy, if that is the right word, of newer members who had so many opportunities to study spirituality and speak with others of God's presence and power in their lives. She said something like “They have their whole lives before them and have directors and programs to help them see God more clearly and discern how to serve Him. I'm an old woman trying to understand the why's and how's of loving and serving God. I wish I had some help.” I only thought a few moments before I said to her “Alice if you want, I could do that for you. I would be glad to be your spiritual director.” I know she was surprised by the offer. She said she'd think about it. A couple hours later the phone rang at Marian Hall and she wanted to set up our first appointment. We met almost every month for close to three years.

I believe the “direction” was mutual. We shared books and prayer experiences and life experiences. Alice was struggling with saying good bye to so many of her peers and coping with her own physical diminishments; often frustrated by her lack of energy and wanting to do and pray more, even when she could barely see or hear. I was struggling with much to do, often too much, and desired time and space to be still and reflect on God's presence. We were quite the pair in our shared journey – each challenged to accept what the other saw as gift. Alice's greatest desire, I believe was to be welcomed by Jesus as a good and faithful servant, a true Sister of Charity, into heaven. I am confident that has happened. And I will continue to talk with my sister, my friend and spiritual companion telling her of all that is happening and looking forward to the day she is there to welcome me and all of us into heaven with one of her hugs.

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