

## **SISTER BARBARA MARY KOVAL**

May 26, 1931 - January 20, 2012

Sister Barbara Mary, daughter of John Koval and Kathryn Papier Koval, was born in Scottsdale, Pennsylvania May 26, 1931. I was told that she bore a strong resemblance to her father.

God expects most of us to emphasize important dimensions in our lives; FAMILY, FRIENDS, COMMUNITY, RELIGION AND WORK, so our human development and our spiritual development are constantly interwoven. For Sister Barbara Mary they all were vital, and she emphasized and embraced them.

I had the privilege of listening to the oral history interview of Sister Barbara Mary that was conducted by Sister Marie Corona Miller in August 2011. She said that she was born during the depression years, but that her father worked in different places, including the A & P Store in Scottsdale, and that God watched over her family.

The community many of us first belong to is our Catholic parish. Barbara was raised in the Byzantine Rite of her mother, while her father belonged to the Latin Rite. When Barbara was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, however, her father and mother decided to contact the pastor of the Latin Rite Church of St. John the Baptist, Father Patrick Graney, to ask that she receive First Communion there. He agreed, and Barbara then went to Saturday religion classes where she loved learning from the catechism, and she read it over and over. Barbara remarked that she was awestruck about receiving her First Communion at age 10.

Barbara went to the public high school, and she discovered that Father Graney was concerned about religious education for his youth. She said he taught the classes himself and made them relevant for teenagers, so she learned a great deal. Again, her human development and spiritual development went hand in glove. After high school, she worked at West Penn Power for five years and then entered the Sisters of Charity at age 23.

When she received her call from God to enter our religious community, she was asked to have her pastor, Father Graney, write a letter of recommendation. Here is an excerpt from that letter:

The bearer, Miss Barbara Ann Koval, is a member of this congregation in good standing. A Catholic young woman of fine character, she has been faithful in the performance of her religious duties. I have every reason to hope that her admission to your holy ranks in the sisterhood should be of much benefit to all.

We know that statement was prophetic since we have all benefitted from knowing and loving her.

It was in the Marian Year of 1954 that Barbara entered the Sisters of Charity on September 8. Those of us who entered with her soon knew her as a wonderful friend who displayed a strong work ethic and had a marvelous sense of humor.

When she was sent as a postulant to teach at Saint Anselm School, she was thrilled when her pastor came to visit her one day. She said that to show his continuing appreciation of her dedication as a religious sister, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of every month that year, he sent flowers for the convent chapel. She loved flowers, and is likely enjoying the special bouquets of roses and other flowers here as she looks down from where she is now.

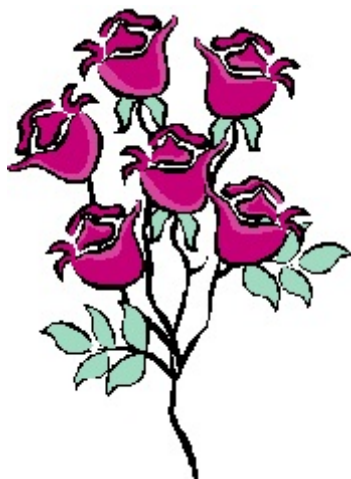
After leaving the novitiate, Sister was assigned to teach business subjects in high school. Two mentors she credited for teaching the classes she needed to complete her degree were Sister M. Perpetua Murphy and Sister Edith Marie Fullen.

In the ensuing years, she was to spend 41 years as a business teacher in 8 different high schools. Because of her untiring work ethic, a sister one day said to her: “Sister, why are you such a workaholic?” Barbara responded, with her quick wit, “And, Sister, why are you such a social butterfly?” They both laughed in admitting their traits.

Another aspect of Sister’s life was her faithful teaching in parish religious education programs. She influenced many young people as she taught them the Biblical messages of Christ and how to put them into practice in their lives. She said in the interview that she believed the Holy Spirit guided her in all the places and ministries where she served.

As mentioned in the newspaper obituary, when reflecting on her life as a Sister of Charity, Sister Barbara Mary stated: “I sum up my religious life with one word: gratitude - gratitude to God for my vocation and avocation, to my mentors for their help and encouragement, and to my family for their spiritual and emotional caring throughout the years.”

Last week, just a few days before Sister Barbara Mary died, I was speaking with her in the gallery of this chapel. She looked at me and said, “You have such a healthy walk and such a healthy voice. I want you to stay healthy.” I smiled and thanked her. I have thought about that notion of health, Barbara, as your words echoed in my mind. Health and salvation are in reality two sides of the same coin, and this is my response to your comment:



Now that you have left this earthly life, we are confident that you have entered into the realm of eternal life opened up for us by Jesus, our savior. As we conclude this Mass of Christian Burial, we believe that you are close to Jesus, your spouse, and experience the joy of being with those whom you loved and with whom you have worked during your life. Owning the symbolic coin of health and salvation is the culmination of the Kingdom of God. Enjoy it, because it is yours forever.

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection  
- Sister Marian Madden  
January 25, 2012*