

REFLECTION – FUNERAL LITURGY – SISTER MARY E. MCCLORY

May 23, 1917 –November 2, 2012



About 8 years ago Sister Mary McClory gave me an envelope with information to be incorporated in the reflection she asked me to do at her funeral liturgy. I was honored by the request and determined to fulfill it, if possible. It's not so common that one stipulates the reflective material but as I considered the paragraphs Mary assigned, I concluded the importance, the value she placed on these topics, and how she chose to be remembered. The obituary for Sister Mary McClory clearly describes a full and productive life, one of positive memories, fruitful experiences—a life of loving, varied services in the Company of Charity. Yet, the papers she gave me referred to her precious family—her physical and spiritual roots—the vital formative elements she wanted shared during the celebration of her funeral.

The narrative begins with the birth of her mother, Agnes Margaret, one of ten children born to Anna Marie O'Hara and Michael Daniel Rogan, both from County Down, Ireland who settled in the Soho district of Pittsburgh. After their marriage they moved to the area near St. Agnes Church, 5th Avenue, where the children attended St. Agnes School, operated by the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Following her 8th grade graduation, Agnes became a sales clerk at Kaufman's in Pittsburgh. She met, fell in love with, and married John Francis McClory, the only one of his 6 siblings to marry. They settled on Woodward Avenue in the Brookline section of Pittsburgh, behind West Liberty Public School (eventually Elizabeth Seton High School). Five children were born to the union: John Anthony, Margaret Helen (dead of whopping cough at 3 months), Mae Elizabeth, and twins. John enrolled at Resurrection School, Mae attended kindergarten and 1st grade at West Liberty, transferring to Resurrection for 2nd grade. To be closer to Resurrection Church and School, the parents bought a lot on Berkshire Avenue where they planned, built and moved the family into a new home in October, 1926.

Agnes Rogan McClory became pregnant shortly after the move and wrote several letters to her sisters (that Sister Mary retrieved and saved) in which she tells of difficulties with this pregnancy. She wrote: “. . . a change of life baby, God's will be done. If you might come for a visit to help for a little while. . .you'll see our beautiful new home which we all love very much;” At the end of June, 1927 Agnes was very close to delivery and she suffered a bad fall while doing the family laundry. Mae had invited some girlfriends over to the house and her mother had prepared refreshments for the ten-year olds. She instructed Mae to send her brother to notify their father that she was not well and waited for him in the upstairs bedroom. Agnes was taken to the hospital; she developed pneumonia, delivered twins—a boy and a girl, all three dead on June 29, 1927. Sister Mary McClory never forgot that terrible time and told a vivid memory of her mother being laid out with the dead twins in each arm. She often recalled, “After mother died, life was not the same.”

For the next three years a live-in housekeeper cared for the family until John Francis McClory remarried; Mae recorded that she never became close to her stepmother and always felt a keen loss of her dear mother. Her school days at Resurrection were happy; she had lots of friends and truly loved the Sisters of Charity who taught her. Mother Mary Joseph Havey was Principal and Mae attested that the very best thing any Sister ever did for her was when Mother Mary Joseph posed the question: “Have you ever thought of becoming a Sister?” At that time Resurrection

offered a high school program up to 11th grade so Mae finished at South Hills High School, but found it “not the same without the Sisters.” She responded to Mother Mary Joseph’s question by petitioning and entered St. Joseph Novitiate on September 8, 1934 to answer God’s call and join with the women whose influence ran deep in her family life.

Sister Alice Ruane, another Brookline native, wrote a tribute to Sister Mary McClory in the Spring 2000 *Celebration*: “In the convent Mae’s name changed to Mary. Her bright smile, hearty laugh, quick wit and desire to give all to God endeared her to family, friends and her new companions in religious life. Years of education and experience enhanced her naturally cheerful disposition and honed excellent people skills.” Sister Mary served as a teacher in St. Stephen and St. Anselm Schools and in 1940 was assigned to DePaul School for Hearing and Speech. From 1956-1959 she taught at St. Jane de Chantal School, Bethesda, then from 1959-1965 served as school principal. In 1965, Sister Mary began a 12-year tenure as curriculum director and then associate director for elementary education in the Diocese of Greensburg. Sister Mary was elected to serve as a General Councilor from 1977-1981. At the conclusion of her term, she and Sister Rosaline Walsh became co-directors of St. Thomas More Manor, a senior-citizen high rise under the auspices of Christian Housing of the Pittsburgh Diocese. Mary and Rosaline oversaw the construction of this high rise, prepared, welcomed and supervised the original residents.

Sister Mary always had a particular fondness for the Southwest and readily accepted an invitation in 1986 to join Sister Leone Dolle in the Ministry of Care at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Scottsdale, Arizona. Ministry of Care is affiliated with the Association of Pastoral Ministers of Care of the Diocese of Phoenix, to deal with certain realities of life, illness, loneliness, isolation and death as vital aspects of every parish. Ministries bring love, caring, compassion and companionship to the sick and needy. Sister Mary spent 14 years of ministry in Scottsdale where she developed five care teams with the assistance of two coordinators of each team to plan and schedule. She trained volunteers to be Eucharistic Ministers and offered regular sessions in personal spirituality. Mary saw Ministry of Care as a most important parish work to enable the laity in a constant outpouring of self through visits to nursing homes and the homebound, and service to the sick and bereaved.

Mary’s file includes several stories or testimonies to her devotion and accomplishment in the ministry. Long-time associates commented: “Sister Mary is the most wonderful person I’ve ever met – outside of my wife.” “She does it all!” “She’s an inspiration—warm, caring—never gets upset.” “She brought a deep spiritual dimension to our ministry – and what a sense of humor!”

Sister Mary received the BS and MEd from Duquesne University and did post graduate work at Pitt and Catholic University. She was certified in English, Social Studies, Speech Correction, Elementary Education and Administration. She also held memberships in a number of affiliated professional organizations. When asked to describe herself, Mary stated: “I think I’m a people person with organizational skills.”

Indeed, she was. Those of us who lived with Mary at Regina House and DePaul Center recognized her enthusiasm and dedication to her assignment as Councilor in charge of apostolic ministry, working hard to match person to task. She was lots of fun to be around when the occasion warranted, a good listener, excellent cook, prayerful, friendly, a Steeler fanatic, an interesting conversationalist. As one of the pioneers in converting a horse stable into a commodious office complex, she came up with clever naming of the spaces after Kentucky Derby winners decorating a large serving tray left behind by the Gumbergs. Her office, dubbed Seattle Slew, was neat as a pin and often resounded with hearty laughter when visitors stopped. Last

night's Vigil provided us with some great stories of this delightful, well-rounded Sister of Charity.

Sister Mary returned to Greensburg and Doran Hall in September of 2000; a copy of the letter she sent to OLPH is in her file and summarizes her attitude: "God is good—my adjustment has gone well. I was a little leery about leaving Scottsdale and my dear friends there, but the One who is in charge works everything out according to what He knows is for the best."

Following her annual retreat at Picture Rocks in 1987, Mary composed a poem, "My Story," which concluded:

My story will soon be ended,
But the best is yet to come;
Mom and Dad and John and I
With HIM will all be one.

A year before, Mary had submitted an example of her handwriting for analysis. The results cited family conditioning, the concept of family, a self contained, sociable individual, with evidence of gentleness and interior strength as predominant characteristics. How true!

As I reviewed the principal points Mary dictated for this reflection, knowing or observing her over the years, I believe her legacy to us is in the coda she appended to the reflection contents provided:

- Love of the Eucharist, influenced by:
- Fr. James L. Quinn. Pastor of Resurrection Church;
 - Parents and brother;
 - Sisters of Charity from school and in the Community;
 - Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish;
 - Perpetual Adoration, requested and sustained by parishioners since 1987.

May your life of sadness and joy, dear Mary, now be gloriously transformed in the reward of perpetual adoration.

Prepared by Jean Augustine, SC
November 7, 2012