

## EULOGY FOR SISTER ALICE NUGENT

Today, as we gather to celebrate the life of Sister Alice Nugent it is most fitting to begin with a quotation from our Constitutions given to us by our Founder, Constant William Van Crombrugghe. Alice was deeply devoted to our Founder, his writings and his teachings. It was the hallmark of her spirituality and her lifelong study. She chose the following quote for her mortuary card:

*“Our Founder calls us, Daughters of Mary and Joseph, to the service of Christ and His Church. He urges us to live our mission to the full, with an unlimited devotion to Jesus Christ, his Church and all our brothers and Sisters.”*

This was the life to which Alice was called; this was the life she fully embraced.

Alice, one of seven siblings, was born to Michael and Margaret Nugent, Co. Tipperary, Ireland on April 27, 1935.

Alice entered the Daughters of Mary and Joseph in 1953. After completing her novitiate in Ireland and Belgium, where she was introduced to our Founder and the charism and mission of our Congregation, she was assigned to California. For a number of years she taught elementary students at Saint Augustine School, Culver City, Our Lady of the Rosary, Paramount, Saint James, La Crescenta, Saint John Fisher, Palos Verdes and Morning Star, San Francisco.

Alice loved teaching but early on she developed chronic hearing loss which worsened through the years. The decision to let go of classroom teaching was a painful one for her. But, undaunted by this set-back she sought alternate modes of ministry.

Soon she joined three other Sisters who were starting a new mission in Recife, Brazil. She became Assistant Director of the local seminary and in the process gained knowledge of Portuguese. Alice loved this assignment and frequently talked about her experiences there, especially her meeting with Dom Helder Camera.

Following this she was called by our General Team to be treasurer and financial administrator in Rome and later in California where she handled the financial business of the Community and the Retreat Center. Alice had a brilliant mind and she was a shrewd, competent and no-nonsense financial administrator. One of our Sisters recalls phoning her as she was moving to a new house. When she told Alice there was no bed in the room prepared for her, Alice said matter-of-factly, “take your bed with you”. Her sense of humor can’t be ignored here, but she was serious! This was Alice, abrupt and practical, but if you could overlook her immediate hurricane approach you would find a soft-spoken, caring, tender soul at her core, a woman who loved animals, especially her dogs.

Perhaps Alice's greatest gift to us was her extraordinary work as Congregational and Provincial Archivist. While she was a novice in Belgium, Alice had been fascinated by the world-view of the Congregation, and later on she recognized that her love of our Founder and his teachings took root that year. Taking on the ministry of archivist was a natural emergence of that love.

To begin her work in Rome, Alice transported hundreds of documents and writings of our Founder from Brussels to Rome driving through the Alps in winter. Included in these treasures were electronic writings of our Founder, Teresa Clement's books, important talks from international meetings and valued historical papers. These files are now in England.

When Alice began her work in setting up the CA archives, she visited several different congregations to observe how they had preserved their history. She involved many of us in her intense research detailing the story of our local convents and schools. Today's archives are well stocked and with Alice's talent for photography, our hallways bear witness to our story. She always believed that our history needs to be read, not just filed away, and so she made them available for all.

Alice had a special love for our DMJ-Africa apostolates. She introduced our African Sisters, who were fundraising in California, to her friend Dora and her daughter Dawn. In 2008 they organized a Bunco Party to raise money for Africa. Since then this annual Bunco Party has attracted many local people as well as DMJ's. Each year we DMJ's in California get a Bunco Party flyer from Alice and if we can't attend, we are expected (as per Alice) to contribute financially.

On November 15<sup>th</sup> Alice suffered a brain aneurysm and as a result she spent a month at St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica. The medical reports concluded that Alice's condition was irreversible and in compliance with her wishes (as expressed in her Advanced Directive) and the advice of the doctors, Alice was sent home to Nazareth on hospice.

During those final weeks it seemed that Alice was in a world of darkness, unaware of what was happening. Several of us did witness short periods of connection with her, struggling to understand what she was attempting to say. For Alice, whose analytical mind always expressed it self quite forcefully, this chapter of her illness must have been a time of silent and deep purification for her. Exteriorly she showed no signs of frustration and one can only deduce from her calm countenance that she was peaceful. She who spoke eloquently of our charism of mercy and compassion throughout her life was being visited by the God of tender mercy and compassion. He was guiding her feet into the way of peace.

Alice lived her final week during the time of the winter solstice, the shortest and darkest day of the year. But this solstice marks a significant turning point in nature's journey toward the light, and its eventual flowering of new life in Spring. We rejoice with Alice who was embraced by the Dawn from on high – Jesus Christ - and carried into eternal light. May she rest in peace.