

Sister Therese Fox, BVM (Rita Maurice)
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, April 18, 2017

Mary Loraine Fox, Niece

There is a hymn “We are many parts, we are all one body. And the gifts we have, we are given to share.” My Aunt Therese shared the gift of encouragement with her family, particularly with her nieces and nephews. She encouraged us to use our talents. Personally, she encouraged me to pursue my creative gifts to draw and practice calligraphy. She was very proud of my sister Camille who was a teacher. She said, “Teaching is a calling.” Camille had a gift she could share with her students. She also encouraged her nieces and nephews to be advocates for their children in school. My nephew John, for example, is left-handed. My Aunt Therese was also left-handed. She strongly encouraged Bernadette, John’s mother, to make sure that John was never forced to be a “righty.”

She visited me when I was stationed at Fort Irwin in California in the middle of the Mojave Desert while she was on a trip in California. She also drove down from Mystic Seaport, Conn., to see me at Fort Eustis in Newport News, Va. She wanted to see where I worked and wanted to know more about what I did. When she came down to Virginia, she had driven all the way from Connecticut and I figured that she needed to get some exercise before making the journey back. I walked her around the battlefield at Yorktown explaining battlefield tactics to her. We also spent time at Colonial Williamsburg. I’m sure with her back problems, she probably was very glad to have the 13-hour drive back to Connecticut.

I would frequently visit her here at Mount Carmel. I was in awe of the artwork here. She would always give me a tour with stories about the artists. On my last visit near All Saints’ Day, we went out for a walk. She patiently waited while I photographed a butterfly that was near the zinnias. I also took a picture of her in front of the Motherhouse that I have on my iPhone. That was our last visit. When I graduated from college, she made this booklet for me. I want to read the opening verse to you.

Look to this day for it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course lie verities and realities of your existence.
The bliss of growth,
The glory of action,
The splendor of beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream
And tomorrow is only a vision;
But today well-lived makes
Yesterday a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore, to this day;
Such is the salutation to the ever-new dawn. (Sanskrit)

Brother David Galinski, FSC—Read by Sister Mary Martens, BVM (Loras)

I first met Therese while I was recruiting for St. Patrick HS in Chicago. She was one of those people who makes a wonderful impression on you. She had a twinkle in her eye, a wonderful Irish smile, a very warm personality, and you knew she was Irish and very proud of it. On my last visit to Mount Carmel, I visited with Therese in her room. She showed me her paintings she received and she was so proud of them. Then she got serious. She said that she was ready to go home to the Lord and wondered what He was waiting for. I told her to be patient. The Lord would take her when He wants her. Well, the Lord wanted her home for Easter. I have a feeling Heaven is not the same since. It is written in the book of Daniel, "They who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity." I know your star is shining brightly. Well done, good and faithful servant. I will miss seeing you on my visits, but I know I have an Irish leprechaun watching over me in heaven.

Sister Regina M. Qualls, BVM

When Therese and Maurine Therese Thiel, BVM moved to the Carmel Circle, they became our neighbors. Therese took on the very special ministry of feeding the hungry. The hungry were Margaret Mary Cosgrove, BVM and myself. We lived next door and you could get to our apartment from theirs by just walking through the garage. We were both working for the congregation at the time.

We would come home to find gingerbread cake or some other wonderful treat on the kitchen counter. At other times, we would open the refrigerator door and there would be a large container of her *marvelous* chicken noodle soup; it was out of this world. Other times there would be a knock at the door and there would be Therese holding a casserole hot out the oven, which was wonderful because we were often in the kitchen trying to figure out what we were going to eat for dinner that night. She was a marvelous cook, and she really looked on that as a ministry. She saw it as her way of just making our day a little bit easier. She would say, "Oh, you've worked so hard all day. Now you don't have to thinking about this and you don't have to do it." We were very, very grateful to Therese for taking care of us so very well.

Sister Helen Maher Garvey, BVM

In 1950, I traveled from New York to Chicago to visit my sister who lived there at the time. Therese Fox took me to the Summer School of Catholic Action. Do you remember the Summer School of Catholic Action? Father Daniel Lord, SJ was there and we sang and had a great day at some big hotel in the city. Besides that, Therese explained to me the street grid for Chicago. She told me about State and Madison; she told me about all the streets. She loved Chicago, she loved its organization, and she loved its people. As some of you may know, her aunt Gertrude Daly was the president of the American Carpet Company. Everywhere Therese went in Sacred Heart Province, we had new carpets. When her family visited Mount Carmel and knelt of the kneelers, they said, "Something must be done." They carpeted all the kneelers at Mount Carmel back in 1953. Her family has been very generous to the community.

Sister Pat Cummings, SSND

I am a first cousin of Therese. I probably knew her longer than anybody here did. I can attest to her calmness and acceptance of suffering even as a young girl. It was after she graduated from eighth grade that she had the back surgery. I remember visiting her lying in a hospital bed in the living room. She was just so joyful and so accepting of whatever was happening. She carried that with her through her life and the suffering that she had.

Sister Catherine Dunn, BVM

It has been said of our set that we were all chiefs and no Indians. Well, Therese was the chief of the chiefs. She always managed, in her organized way, to bring us together and to know where almost everyone was. We appreciated that about her. She was fun to be with and she had a heart as big as herself. Today we give thanks that she was part of our life and our very foundation of growing in religious life.

Marilyn Highlander Pool, BVM Associate—Read by Sister Karen Mary Conover, BVM

The Sunday of my last visit to Mount Carmel, which was last May, I was supposed to meet with Therese after lunch for a visit with her in her room. She sent me a note telling me that she got a surprise phone call from one of her boy students whom she taught many, many years ago, now a married man in his fifties. He was in the area and didn't want to go back home without seeing her. So off she went to lunch with him and his wife. She finally came home after 5 o'clock. When I entered her room, she was propped up in bed, exhausted and in back and foot pain, but with the biggest smile on her face. She talked nonstop for about 20 minutes about her visit. She couldn't understand how she made such an impression on this young man. He wanted her to know that and to thank her for what she said to him in school that day long ago. He told her that he carried her in his heart for that day forward and just wanted her to know.

Camille Fernandez, Niece

I think all of us, my brother and sisters and family, feel a little awkward sitting in the front because we feel that all of you have been such an important part of her life and that you are her family. We thank you for all of your love, care and kindness. We would like to have been with her more often. She was always very understanding and knew that we had busy lives. I thank all of you for being there for her.

I came up here to tell a funny story, but it's hard to do now. When my husband and I were dating and he came up to our cottage in Long Beach, my Aunt Therese was there. She was always coming and going to our summerhouse like all of us. My husband commented, "Oh my, I can't believe I just saw a nun in a bathing suit!" That's my Aunt Therese. I never really thought of her as a nun; she was my Aunt Therese. She put a new face for all of you sisters on the beach. She always grounded us in our faith, yet she was a real person who cooked and baked for us, loved us and talked about our lives, movies and books. She wasn't just a sister to us; she was our Aunt Therese. We will love and miss her. We wish all of you well. We thank you for all your love for her.

Sister Therese Mackin, BVM

We always had good times together. I always enjoyed being with her and had a lot of fun with her. Yet, she always berated me that Fox is shorter than Mackin so Therese Fox preceded Therese Mackin. We had a good time.

Sister Anne Marie McKenna, BVM

Therese herself is going to get the last word here. She wrote the following to be read at the end of her funeral:

Celebration of Gratitude by Sister Therese Fox, BVM

To the Lord, for the call and gift of my years as a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To the congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for its challenges, support and charity to and for me.

To Mother and Dad, for the faith, life and love they lived and shared with me.

To Gertrude, for her love, example and support.

To Tom, Morris, John, Bill and your families, for all you have been and given of yourselves on my behalf.

To my friends, for the precious gift of your friendship. Thanks for accepting me and sharing with me.

To Maurine, for ever so much.

To Dolores and Ann, thank you, thank you, thank you.