

Sister Therese J. Jacobs, BVM (Therese Carmelle)
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, April 12, 2017

Former Co-Workers at the Centre of Spiritual Renewal, Kumasi, Ghana—Read by Sister Anne Marie McKenna, BVM

This is a little tribute from the workers at the Centre for Spiritual Renewal. In deep sorrow, we want to tell the world a mighty tree has fallen. It was heart breaking to hear of the death of Sister Therese.

Sister Therese, you returned to Ghana after your visit to Sister Mary Anne Hoopé, BVM in 2000 and joined the staff of the Centre. Your years of service here were so fruitful and a great blessing to so many people. Your presence impacted so many lives. Though your major duty was probably spiritual, drawing people to God and helping them deepen their faith, you went the extra mile and saw a need to help the poor and less privileged in life.

Your immeasurable contribution to our children's education is something we will never forget. Our children's well-being was so important to you that you spent many hours contacting benefactors. You wanted to ensure that our children had access to quality education. You played a significant role in the lives of all the workers here. We are going to miss you a lot. All who interacted with you as directees in Centering Prayer and workshops will miss you a lot. Our Sunday community here at the Centre has been missing you ever since you left. Your beautiful voice and the sounds of your keyboard still echo in our ears. (They did mention that this coming Easter Sunday, they will be singing again a joyous song that Therese taught them which has been part of their Easter liturgy ever since.)

I, Stephen, still have it very fresh in my memory how we arranged flowers together. I learned so much from you and think of you so often, especially at Easter and Christmas. When we heard you were ill, we prayed for you and hoped you would get well. We shared your pain and asked God to heal you, but God called you to his glory. You fought a good fight. You ran the race. Now the glory is yours. We know you loved sweets and candy. May you find sweets and candies on the table of your Maker who has invited you home. We love you, Therese, but God loves you more. Rest in perfect peace!

Susan Komis, (Read by Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM)

Therese was drawn to contemplative prayer and wanted to share the jewels of contemplative prayer with others. She often spoke of how contemplative prayer had changed her life and deepened her relationship with God. I emailed Father Thomas Keating and I know that he too will be holding Therese in prayer.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

I was privileged to share life with Sister Therese for seven years in Ghana. She became known as the Queen Mother of Centering Prayer. Therese first met Susan when Susan ministered with Contemplative Outreach and Therese was establishing contemplative prayer in Jackson, Miss. Soon she was called to serve in Ghana where she continued to offer workshops on contemplative and centering prayer. Therese traveled to Ghana to share what she loved. When Susan visited Ghana, she could not believe how much one person could accomplish. Sister Therese was so alive. She gave everything she had to every endeavor she was called to serve. She was amazing. She was a woman with a vivacious nature, energy and enthusiasm for her work, community, love of life, and her love of God.

Judy Jacobs Richardson, Niece

Sister Therese taught for three years out of my four years in high school. She was in charge of Glee Club and teaching a bunch of roustabouts how to sing and perform in the school musicals, Christmas concerts, and St. Patrick's Day celebrations. One of those years, the whole cast was missing up to 15 minutes before the performance. They had skipped school and had gone to the parade downtown, but did get back in time. One late night during play practice, I was waiting for my part when Therese was walking down one of the hallways and ran into a teenage boy who didn't look like he belonged there—it was an all-girls school. She said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I'm here to pick up my girlfriend." She asked, "What is her name?" He said, "Judy Jacobs." She said, "Well, you go down this hallway and up the stairs and take a left." She didn't say anything more. I didn't hear about it until my husband, who was that boy, told me about it.

Sister Mary Jean Ferry, BVM

I visited Therese many times as she was dying. Every single time she said, "I am so blessed. My life has been nothing but blessings. Pray that I go home. I want to see the face of God." I said, "Therese, look at my face." She opened her eyes wide and I opened my eyes wide. Our eyes locked. It was so beautiful. There was so much love that both of us saw the face of God. Therese, we ask you to continue to teach us how to pray and to love as you loved.

Sister Mary M. O'Connor, BVM (Bertrille)

I was in Hawaii with Therese. I went there from Seattle. In Seattle, we did everything together so I was used to great organization. When I got to Kauai, it was a different atmosphere. Sister Mary Joel Kramer and Therese were there waiting for me. My clothing had not yet arrived, so I had to wear my good habit. They said, "Would you like to go to the ocean with us?" I said, "I don't think I can go to the ocean with my habit on." "Don't worry. We have boys from our school who will be there to help you get from rock to rock." I trusted them. I never expected to be so welcomed, but I was welcomed from the very beginning. We went to the ocean and had a pleasant day. The boys were wonderful in their care of the sisters. I will always appreciate the welcome I received and the many ways Therese showed kindness to me.

Sister Gayle Brabec, BVM

Therese and I entered together and were friends in the novitiate. When she went to Hawaii and I the following year, it was a great rejoicing because Therese and I were always friends. I am most grateful for the wonderful, beautiful years we lived there together and all of her gifts she shared with us.

Mary Ann Stark, Niece

Our memories are many. She helped many of us with our wedding plans, the scripture readings, and the music. Even our own children have benefited from her knowledge of the scripture and music. We continue to carry her in our hearts.

Marian Jacobs, Sister-in-Law

My family is one of the great groups of nieces and nephews whom she watched over with her prayers and song, her messages and attendance. She didn't miss any event that she could attend. She not only was a fun visitor, she also liked to help cook. She was a very good cook. I really enjoyed her chicken soup recipe. This winter I got it out and called her to let her know I was using her recipe. I think she developed it when she was down in Jackson, Miss. Another favorite recipe was her Christmas fruitcake that she had doctored up a bit. She was proud of her recipe for Irish soda bread. She said, "It was my mother's recipe, but I added a few things." She was a wonderful sister-in-law and she loved her family, and all her nieces and nephews. We miss her.

Sister LaDonna Manternach, BVM

I am one of Therese's novices from Mount Carmel. She never missed a day to say, "I'm so proud of you, I'm so proud of you" in so many ways. When she returned from the hospital a few weeks ago, I went to visit her on St. Patrick's Day. I was thinking, *I'd like to sing a song with her*. The two of us shared music. I decided to do "Christ before Us, Christ beside Us." So when I went in, I said, "Therese, would you like to hear a song?" She said, "Oh, whatever you want to do is fine." I sang through the song and she listened very attentively. Then I said, "Now you rest. I'll be back another time." As I was nearly to the door, she said with as much voice as she could muster, "Could you sing 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling?'" I don't have a lot of Irish in me, but I knew the song, so we sang that together. I said, "Okay, Therese, it's time to rest." I started walking out again and she said, "Make sure these things are at my funeral." She was planning all the time. Music was so important to her and I am glad we were able to share that.

Sister Donna Bebensee, BVM (St. Janet)

After I entered the BVMs, my father would ask me, "Have you met the Jacobs girl yet?" I would have to say, "No." One day as an amputee, he came to visit me in Davenport. I had car trouble so he brought my brother-in-law down to fix the car. Dad needed to rest because of his lost limb. The sisters took him in and gave him a bed on which to stretch out. About an hour later, he comes out huffing and puffing and says, "That room I was in, it has a picture of Moon Jacobs. What's it doing in that room?" I said, "Dad, you were in Therese's room. That's her dad." Well, I had finally met the Jacobs girl and it was a wonderful meeting. Therese has been my spiritual director on and off for a long time. Sometimes she had to do it long distance through email. I can't tell you enough how much I loved her and how her own spirit and love of God has touched my soul.

Sister Mary Paul Francis Bailey, BVM

I am a member of that very wonderful set to which Therese belonged. I did not intend to tell you this story, but I am sure that from heaven she would be telling me in no uncertain terms, that I did a misdeed, because Therese was *the* party girl. I am positive that everybody in this room and especially the Jacobs clan knows how she could throw a party. Let me tell you, so do the BVMs, especially those who are her close friends. Therese just came to live at Mount Carmel this past September. However, every time she came to Dubuque, she said, "Let's have a party!" She would say she had this and that but then ask, "Can you get something else?" Well, you know what the something else was! I said, "I'll see what I can do." There were a few other people who were nice enough to bring the rest. Even after she came back from the hospital, as sick as she was, she said, "We've got to have a party." I said, "Therese, you can hardly breathe." She said, "That's okay; they can breathe." I would not be doing her justice if I didn't give her credit for being such a great Irish party girl. We had a wonderful time.

Sister Mary Lois Dolphin, BVM

Therese received a card from her nephew Rich, which unfortunately she never got to read. Rich is in Arizona and cannot travel due to recent surgery. In his card, he commented on her role in the family to gather people together. She was always the one who wanted the reunions. In the end, he said, "Aunt Therese, you have been a great influence in my life. When I have to make an unselfish decision, I ask myself—What would Aunt Therese do?"

Tom Jacobs, Nephew

Speaking of the party girl, we did have many family reunions and Therese loved to be a part of them. I was about 18 years old when we had one in a park in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, with a big group of 50 to 100 people. We were all enjoying the event, but Therese wanted to have Mass and was trying to quiet us down. Nobody else in the family could have pulled that off—rounding up all the partyers and getting us

to settle down. It spoke to me about how much respect and influence she had in our family. She was on the cutting edge too. She wanted to reflect on common values we held as the family. Now you hear about that kind of discussion in organizations and businesses all the time. Therese was always, from my perspective, ahead of her time. She will be missed.

Tom Jacobs, Nephew

Just to add to the confusion, my name is also Tom Jacobs! I was sitting there reflecting and just remembered one day (when I was about 11) being roped into cleaning up grandma's house with Therese. I don't remember what it was that we talked about that day, only that Therese was a wonderful conversationalist who had the ability to make you feel special. That was over 50 years ago and just a bit of drudgery, yet still, there was a warm feeling. Every time I would see Therese after that, there was a renewal of that feeling.

Sister Angele Lutgen, BVM

I lived with Therese twice in my life. She had a wonderful way of living out and sharing her spirituality and hospitality and sharing her interest in social justice. Thank you, Therese, for your friendship and all that you shared with me over the years.

Jenny Jacobs, Grandniece

I just want to testify to how much she meant to the family that there are grandnieces, grandnephews, great-grandnieces, and great-grandnephews here. She always made every one of us feel special and chatted with us whenever we saw her. Even my husband said, "You should definitely go to the funeral because she was always such a kind, warm person."

Sister Therese Frelo, BVM (Ann Carmelle)

I think the song "O Lord, You Are the Center of My Life" was beautifully chosen. That has always been so much a part of Therese's spirituality. She had the ability make you feel unique when you were with her. She gave you all her attention; you felt that you were her friend. One of our sisters said to me, "I never met anybody who had so many friends!" She certainly did and each one thought they were special. Thank you, Therese, for giving yourself to us.

Sister Carolyn Farrell, BVM (Lester)

I want to lift up Therese's time in Des Moines, Iowa. She worked at Holy Trinity Parish, the home parish of my family. She was well loved in Des Moines and worked with my younger brother, who was about 19, and his fiancée, who was 18 and not a Catholic. Therese was wonderful with them. The wedding looked like a high school prom. Through the years, Therese would always ask about them, and they remembered and asked about her. She was so special to them. Therese's gift was felt by many people in her various ministries. I don't think she ever missed a beat. She was a great blessing. I greatly thank Therese for working with and influencing my brother and sister-in-law.

Leslie James, Surrogate Niece

Therese was the heart, the core, of the family. She knew everything that everybody was doing and everything that everybody was up to. If you hadn't seen somebody in 10 years, Therese could give you the scoop on them. If you needed any real information, you could go to Therese because she had the 411 on everybody. She was the person in the family with the correct information. Anything you needed, she had it. She will always be remembered as the heart of the family.

Sister Paulette Skiba, BVM

When I was one of Therese's novices, I was driving and she was in the car with me. I was trying to be so careful when Therese said to me, "You know, you don't have to go the speed limit."

Sister Anne Marie McKenna, BVM

Two short quotes came my way as I was preparing for this funeral that very succinctly sums up much of what we have shared this morning. Someone emailed me that she had lived with Mary Margaret O'Shea, BVM in the 1960s and Mary Margaret had said to her that, "Therese helped me realize that it is possible to carry out the gospel and love everyone." On the flip side of that, one of Therese's novices told me that when she heard Therese Jacobs was going to be her novice directress, she said to another BVM, "Who is Therese? Tell me about her." I thought, and I think you would agree, *if only I could have this three-word definition given of me*. Who is Therese? She is love. I think all of you have born testament to that this morning. Thank you for all of your sharing.

Frances Jacobs, Brother

This morning brings back to me that, like one of the speakers said, you don't have to worry about the speed limit—Therese was always floorboard. She had great respect for her family and loved all families. While growing up, we lived over a mile from St. Mary School. It was a long walk and we didn't have any other means of transportation. I remember her walking down the street with her books and her head down. She was a bit pigeon-toed, but it never slowed her up. She was a little athletically inclined. Some of you may know that she could square dance. We had a caller at one time who said, "Good guys don't always wear white." She is at a place now where color doesn't make any difference. It's all beauty. For me to have been her brother and a survivor has been such a great privilege. The experience of this last month, through her illness and the care that was given to her, has been a matter of peacefulness and joy. For that, I am eternally grateful.

Emily Wilkinson, Grandniece

Therese was really the heart of the family and responsible for getting everybody together. Growing up about an hour and a half from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, she was around all the time. She always seemed so adventurous to me. She traveled the world and helped so many people. I never knew where she was until she was in Cedar Rapids. She was a wonderful visitor. I consider myself blessed that two of my children had the opportunity to meet her. While they may not remember her well in the years to come, I will. We were blessed to have her with us in my home this last Easter. My grandfather passed away 10 years ago. She always reminded me of him so I will certainly miss that presence.