

COMMENTARY  
SISTER FRANCES MAUREEN MCGRORY  
MARCH 30, 2011

**A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew:**

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the realm of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put the little one in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the realm of heaven. Those who humble themselves like this child, such are the greatest in the realm of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me."

*Matthew 18:1-5*

The Gospel of the Lord.

**"Whatever will come my way, whether good or bad, may I accept it calmly, and always give thanks to God, who has ever shown me how I should believe in God, unfailing and without end.**

**Prayer of St. Patrick**

Sister Francis Maureen McGrory was born Frances Mary to Daniel and Winifred McGrory in Boston MA, July 23, 1927. Frances was the oldest of 12 children. The family moved to Chicago when Frances was very young and settled in St. Mel parish. Frances attended St. Mel Grade School and Providence High School. Her father worked for the CTA and her mother had plenty to do caring for her large family. After most of the children were grown she worked at Brach's candy factory. Daniel and Winnifred certainly provided a good and solid Catholic upbringing for their children.

After graduating from Providence in 1945 Frances entered the Sisters of Providence in Feb. of 1946. After completing her novitiate she began her teaching career as a primary teacher at Sacred Heart School in Evansville and then at St. John the Baptist in Ft. Wayne. She then returned to St. Mary's in preparation for her final vows which she pronounced on August 15, 1953.

After taking her vows she was assigned to St. Suzanna's in Plainfield where she worked with her good friend, Sister Ann William Patrick, for five years. Sister Ann William became ill and died the year after Frances was transferred to Nativity Parish in Indianapolis, where she served as principal and teacher. Frances spoke of how difficult it was to leave her friend at such a trying time.

Her family was pleased when Frances was assigned as 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at St. Angela School in Chicago in 1964 as it made visiting her much easier. The following year she was named principal of St. Angela and remained principal for the next 15 years.

I was assigned in 1965 to St. Angela which was thriving with over 1200 students, three classes of each grade from 1 to 8. Many a night we spent in the basement of the convent with the mimeograph machine running off 1200 copies of letters to parents, or booklists or newsletters, counting them and putting them in piles according to class sizes. Frances was what we call in community a "real school woman." She kept up on all the new school trends and implemented them. Frances knew how to hire good teachers, coach them and how to handle the students and parents. She made many friends and kept in touch for years.

She always got along with the pastors. Monsignor Daniel Cunningham was pastor at Angela's when Frances arrived. He was also the superintendent of schools for many years. He knew he had a good one in Frances and would often take some of the sisters to dinner and once a year tickets to a Notre Dame game. Another good friend was Monsignor Ken Velo who was assigned to St. Angela's as a young priest. He's kept up with Frances through the years along with many of the teachers and sisters.

Frances knew when to be kind and when to be stern with the students. She told of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy who called the office pretending to be his father reporting that James was sick and would not be in school. Unfortunately for that young man S. Frances Maureen happened to answer the phone. "James, are you sick?" "No Sister." "You get up to this school immediately." "Yes Sister." Fifteen minutes later the boy appeared in the office. Frances laughed so hard telling us the story at dinner.

Frances knew the circumstances of the families in the school. I recently had a graduate of St. Angela's who went on to Mother Guerin High School tell me she came from a large family that had 2 children in high school and 5 at St. Angela's when her father died suddenly. She said her mother never received another tuition bill from the school and all the younger children finished at St. Angela's. "Our family will never forget the kindness of S. Frances Maureen", she said. The young woman went on to dental school and for several years was Frances' dentist. When I told her that Frances was at the Woods she said, "Oh I'll be happy to drive down there and take care of her teeth."

Her time at St. Angela's completed, Frances entered a sabbatical program at the University of Notre Dame which she enjoyed very much and again made new friends. Returning to Chicago she became principal at St. Francis Borgia School but after two years she was elected a member of the Provincial team of St. Joseph Province. She served in that position for 8 years with Sister Rose Ann Eaton and S. Margaret Ann McNamara.

So you would think, well that's enough, but oh no, Frances took on yet another demanding ministry as Principal of St. Domitilla's School in Hillside where she served for six years. It was during this time that she contracted cancer and after surgery and later chemo treatment she continued to drive to school each day.

In 1998 she retired to Mother Guerin convent in River Grove but volunteered her mornings every day for 9 years as bookkeeper for Providence Family Services at Maternity BVM in Chicago. When she realized she was slipping a bit she voluntarily gave up driving. In the summer of 2008 she went home to the Woods for community. She had a fall and was in health care and never returned to Guerin. Another difficult time for her.

When you first met Frances you might think she was shy and a little conservative. And she could be until you got to know her. She had a real adventurous streak in her. In the mid 1980's I was assigned to work in Taiwan for a year and when it was nearing time to return home she wrote to me and suggested I return home by way of London and we could meet in London and go to Ireland. She also told me if I could just get over to Hong Kong I could get a ticket to London as flights between London and Hong Kong were among the cheapest in the world. {Hong Kong still belonged to Great Britain at the time.} So I met her in London and traveled to Ireland, traveling the Sister of Providence way by staying in convents. She traveled to Taiwan to visit her younger sister Jean who is a Daughter of Charity stationed for many years in Taiwan and visited her sister Margaret in California. And of course when she was principal she traveled to the meetings of the National Catholic Education Association meetings, wherever they were held, keeping up on the latest educational trends.

Frances was not much of a sports fan but every day she religiously read the "Irish sports page" also known as the obituaries in the Chicago Tribune. She would scan the names for people connected to schools where she had been. Then she would call teachers and friends asking, "Do you remember so and so, or did you teach them?" This of course was really just an extension of her ministry, staying connected to the end.

Through all of the years Frances remained quite close to her family. Many a trip she made to the south side for the South Side St. Patrick's Day parade. And in such a large family there were always Baptisms, First Communions, Weddings and numerous occasions for get-togethers. And sadly enough, funerals. The family has lost 4 sisters and 2 brothers. Frances had a large extended family especially her dear cousin, S. George McGrory, her younger cousin Father Vince Costello and their families. And there were many family celebrations when Jean came home to visit. If Frances ever needed a ride anywhere her brother Dan would pick her up or Ellen or Maureen and if need be, Colleen and Pete would come from the south side.

Yes Frances was a loyal and devoted sister, aunt and friend to many. She was a true and dedicated Sister of Providence carrying on the mission of the Congregation to the very end. And I am sure Frances would want to end with a word of thanks to all those in Mother Theodore West who cared for her with such love. She would always say "They are so good to us."

So let us rest assured that as Frances made the journey through death into eternal life she was received with the words "Well done my good and faithful servant, come and receive the reward that has been prepared for you for all eternity."