



Remembering Sister Alice (Edmund Campion) Miller, IHM July 31, 1934 – Feb. 5, 2009

With heavy hearts we gather here and sing – “How Can I Keep From Singing” because we come to celebrate the life of Alice Miller, our sister, our sibling, our friend, our support.

Our reading from Luke 4:16 is at the heart of the Gospel and expresses the heart of the IHM community. It certainly touches the heart of Alice’s life. With a sense of urgency Jesus is sent by God, to bring good news...proclaim liberty...free the downtrodden... to proclaim the favor of our God. I know this expresses Alice’s life...being active, involved, being good news.

Alice was a cherished member of our family. She was born on July 31, 1934 to Marie and George Miller, devoted, working-class parents, who took their Christian vocation seriously. We lived in St. Matthew Parish, Detroit. She was preceded by George, Rose Marie, Jim and followed by Marie, Chuck and Betty. Being smack in the middle of seven children, she sometimes had to fight her way. She was feisty, loving, laughing, adventuresome – sensitive, yet reaching out...always a helper. Alice knew how to get things done even at an early age. My earliest memory of Alice was from the summers at our cottage on Lake Huron. I was about 3-4 yrs. old, not able to walk very well, often falling as we ran outside and always crying out “Hey, wait for me,” and always Alice would run back and take my hand and pull me up – then we would run to catch up with the others. I think this is the image of Alice – that outstretched hand that lifts others up.

In many ways, Alice was at the heart of our family in her adult years...always the planner, organizer. Her house was the center of gatherings, of parties, of celebrations. She could sometimes be bossy, but planned ahead to make things happen and make people feel welcome. We have been blessed to have a close family and Alice was devoted to her many nieces and nephews...again, much happened in her presence...a loving aunt...a confidante where there was a need, she had an understanding heart and was a soft place to fall...a woman who could laugh at life.

IHM COMMUNITY

In 1952, when she was 18 years old, with a broken heart I drove to Monroe with our parents to take Alice to the IHM Motherhouse. I thought I was losing my best friend. Alice followed her dream, to begin a new, mysterious way of life, to pursue a deep call to life as an IHM, to become a disciple of the Lord. Alice took hold and ran with it...always with a sense of humor.

On Monday, with a heavy heart, we brought our sick sister home to the IHM Health Care. In her humorous way, she quipped, “This is just a dry run.” She fully expected to take some time to heal and return to her ministry at St. Anne Parish. It is as an IHM that Alice deepened in her commitment to God and God’s people, mastered the art of prayer and reflective living. She prayed deeply and often, struggled to live the Gospel, had little patience for empty piety and had a passion for mission. Whatever she did, she truly lived and loved fully. As an IHM, Alice was involved in committees, study groups, future planning – involved in whatever had value to further our mission. Recent years, while struggling with cancer, she took an active leadership role in our golf outings, Motherhouse renovation, Chapel Committee. She had a great ability to call forth the gifts of others – before you knew it, you were on a working committee with Alice! She had a special love for our senior sisters and organized the Christmas Angel project for many years.

Alice was a faithful daughter of the church – all her ministry was Church-related. She was fully committed to Christ and the Gospel. Alice was a lover of sacred scripture and liturgy and was able

to work well, not without struggle, within the narrow or sometimes unjust structures of the institutional Church. Always her focus was on the people of God. Alice was the welcoming face of Church and had a passion for the people of God.

IN MISSION

The image of the outstretched hand personified her ministry. As a teacher, she took charge and handled difficult students with a sense of humor. She was loved for her ability to enjoy a joke...to show that human face of Christ, yet she was diligent in working to become a great teacher.

She had a passion for mission – for all of God’s people. Her later years were dedicated to pastoral ministry: 12 years at St. Rene, 24 years at St. Anne, where her hands reached out to so many kinds of people...allowed them in to become part of her life – a teacher, counselor, advisor, listener, spiritual guide, motivator, confidante, friend. Alice had many friends...in family, with IHMs, lay friends. She was a fun person to be with and could get activities going.

Alice had a special love for the poor, the needy and sought opportunities for outreach that became colossal projects because of her organization: Thanksgiving baskets, Giving Tree projects, MCREST...all became part of St. Anne Parish outreach. She made things happen and the needs of others were her focus. She was ALWAYS INVOLVED – NEVER SELF-ABSORBED.

Alice was a forgiving woman. She learned how to forgive, to begin anew, even when misunderstood and hurt deeply. She never carried grudges. I admired her wonderful ability to put her life in God’s hands.

With the same energy, fight, Alice lived with cancer for four years. I know she deepened, was purified in these years and an inner strength and courage were so evident to us. She struggled to live normally and well, while embracing her disease. She believed being involved with God’s people was necessary to living fully even to the end. She loved her ministry with the people of St. Anne Parish. The day she left for Monroe, Alice had to stop by the parish to be sure things were organized for Lent and Easter. On Monday, with a heavy heart we brought our sick sister home to the Health Care Center. In her own way, Alice explained it as a “dry run” to see how things would be in the future for her. Our merciful God had other plans.

In her own words, I share with you her writing in the IHM Book of Life:

My heart is filled with gratitude
for God’s wondrous love.

People, events and a community of spiritual women

Have grounded me with

Growth Openness

Challenges Spirituality

Through all, God’s protective love has been the source of my
strength and faithfulness.

Because of this rich past, I walk with confidence toward the future.

Trusting that in the end, God’s work will be done.

We love you, Alice, and commit you to God with all our family and IHM Sisters living now in light.

Marie Miller, IHM

Feb. 8, 2009