



Remembering Sister Connie (Silverius) Parran, IHM

Sept. 30, 1921 - May 21, 2008

Listen to this little poem from Connie's Page of Life, and see if you agree with me in feeling that this is exactly the spirit of our Connie.

A Cricket's Canticle

Look down, dear God, I'm hiding in the grass
Playing my violin from dawn to night,
A tiny sound and badly out of tune,
But good enough for Mother Earth's delight.

I have to laugh, just listening to myself,
And then I jump to show I'm full of song.
I trust, Great God, you're cheered up by my tunes
Whenever you are sad and things go wrong.

I'm cheerful for the sun that warms my back,
I'm thankful for the music of my days,
So I will play my fiddle all my life,
Rejoicing in the comfort of your gaze.

Connie was very intelligent, but at the same time very simple. She was not ostentatious or noisy but had a passion that was genuine. She loved the poor; she prayed for the poor; she welcomed the poor; she acted for the poor; she gave all of herself to the poor. Her interests and ministries showed a deep caring for those who were in need, whether educationally, economically, politically, or emotionally. Her ministries, besides teaching in her early years, included many years of pastoral ministry. She was especially happy to serve at St. Michael's parish here in Monroe where she had attended St. Mary's Academy.

In later years, she felt called to serve three years of pastoral care with the Native Americans in the West. And, in her last ministry at St. Denis in Royal Oak, her care for the homeless became even more real to her as she sacrificed even her nights of sleep in care of them. There was a rotating homeless shelter for 30 parishes. Connie started a warming center for the homeless who included addicts, alcoholics and some mentally disturbed people. Her reading, which was very important to

her, especially the current news, made up much of her prayer life. She was passionate about social justice and always inserted that topic early in her conversations.

One of the persons with whom she worked wrote this about her: "Cheeks well-scrubbed, mind well-honed, eyes alive with humor and kindness, Sr. Connie Parran, IHM, brings to Prince of Peace (one of her parish ministries) an expertise and rapport with young people, an education rich in theology, an enthusiasm difficult to match. The same person wrote: "I feel enriched by knowing her, and am reminded of a verse from Proverbs: "She opens her mouth with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

I met Connie at a network conference in Washington and we've been good friends ever since. I am grateful for the mystery and genuine gifts of friendship. We worked well together, especially in peace and justice events, such as war protest marches, soup kitchens, Williams International demonstrations, Focus Hope walks and Pax Christi events.

Once, when Connie came to visit, we ventured upon an art studio. We each purchased a print called "My Friends in the Field" and labeled it "Shepherdess." I gave mine away – Connie kept hers. While sitting in her room while she was asleep, I looked more deeply at this picture and said, "Oh my God, this was Connie's life!" She loved the sheep wherever she went. Last Saturday Chris asked her what she thought of the picture now, and she replied the person was very comfortable with sheep and they are comfortable with her.

Connie had great hopes for our Church and seemed always to be one step ahead. This is a note from one of the interfaith programs Connie held and these are her words: "Indeed, this was an inspiring and beautiful weekend from beginning to end. Our Episcopalian friends touched us with their warmth, friendliness and deep faith. Their spirit will continue to remain with us." In return, the note she received from the wife of the Episcopalian priest said, "Dear Sister Connie, we are still glowing from your loving care. Everyone had a great time with your youth. I think little Beth's tears said it all...they hated to say goodbye! Please thank everyone for sharing with us. It was a beautiful and warm experience. We truly did see Jesus in all of you."

Connie had a warm and very loving relationship with her family. Their support and attention was so appreciated by her, and in recent times she spoke of having good phone talks with her beloved sisters on an almost daily basis. In more recent times, she would often say that the only one left was her baby brother Ronnie. This same tie was true of her appreciation and support of her IHM family...she felt privileged to be part of both these families.

If we could ask Connie now what was the most important and significant aspect of her life, I think she would say her ministries, and she might use some of the following quotes: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, thirsty and you gave me to drink, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me." Connie, we feel that

you did indeed model the compassionate Jesus in your life, and we know that you now have experienced His promise of life forever with your God.

And, for those in her family whom she cherished so much, and those whose lives she touched, as well as her IHM Sisters and her special friends, the nurses who cared for her in her last years, the nurses aides, her Hospice family, the cleaning personnel, administration and pastoral care, may the memories of Connie bring much comfort to our hearts.

Sister Joan Kusak, IHM
May 27, 2008