

Reflection

Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate
Joliet, IL

Sr. Irene Yosick, OSF

By: Kathleen Rossman, OSF, Wednesday, November 6, 2024

"As a deer runs for running water, so I yearn for you, my God." These words from Psalm 42, which Sr. Irene chose for this Liturgy, exemplify her life-stance: yearning for God, finding God wherever she went and with whomever she was spending time.

This attitude so permeated Irene's life, that others, perhaps without consciously realizing their own yearning for God, sought her out to quench their own thirst, whether it be for education, leadership or companionship. Even those who cared for her found peace and comfort in being with her. God was her source of living water, which she, in turn, offered to others.

Even though she was assigned the roles of Superior and Principal, those who lived with her during the time of their first assignment to teaching and convent life found encouragement, empowerment and equality in sisterhood. Her motto was: "to be a Sister is to be a sister."

A source of quenching thirst, Irene received many gifts of gratitude, but always with a note of thanks from her in return. Up until recent weeks, Irene was an avid note writer, enjoying the friendships of many and receiving a bounty of get well and thinking-of-you cards.

"Our dying cannot be deferred...Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are here." Sobering though these initial words of our first reading

from Wisdom might strike us, to a realist and one who lives in God's presence, they are an incentive to make the most of life. And that Irene did, both in her service, kindness, generosity and seeing a challenge as an opportunity. From the poverty in South Chicago to the wealth in Worthington, Ohio, Irene initiated ways for her community of Sisters to be involved with those in need.

Stories include weekly bread deliveries to those in need as well as taking groceries to a family's home in South Chicago at Christmas time, only to discover pitiful conditions. Seeing nothing Christmasy there, she and the other sisters decided to ask a local store to donate a large Nativity Set, which they left on their doorstep. *"Enjoy the good things..."*

Being one who envisioned an opportunity within a challenge, the story is told of upper grade teachers complaining that those in the lower grades had it much easier than they. At the next faculty meeting, Irene announced that the teachers would switch grades for a day. Needless to say, there was no more complaining...oh the wisdom of Irene!

In our 2nd reading, from the Book of Revelations, we hear, *"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. God will dwell with them, and they will be God's people and God will always be with them."* Having grown up in a loving Catholic family as one of 10 children, Irene was immersed in loving and being loved.

We know that when Irene's parents became ill and needed around-the-clock care, she felt called to move in with them. Following their deaths she cared for siblings as well as shut-ins and those in hospitals and nursing homes. These people were God's people, and God was with them through the love of her heart and hands during her 25 years ministering in her home town of Shelby.

Over the years, she, who was loved by so many, also knew God was with her through so many kindnesses from family and friends. Her siblings' children and even their children have come to visit her, call and write her and delight her with their ordering groceries to be delivered to her at the retirement home where she lived in Joliet, so that with the pain she experienced in walking, she could enjoy some meals in her own room.

We turn now to the Gospel chosen by Irene, that of the Beatitudes, truly Irene's personal Gospel for living. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers...*for Irene, who, in her own thirsting for God, understood these beloved people of God, and in doing so, responded to the Spirit's invitations to reveal God's presence year by year and day by day with each person she encountered.

Returning now to our 1st reading from Wisdom, we hear, *"I thirst for God, the living God; when shall I go to see the face of God?"* You are there now, Irene, seeing the face of God, the Resurrection and the Life. Thank you for revealing the face of God to us these many years. In missing you, we rejoice with you that your yearning is fulfilled.

**Reflection by:
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