

**Vigil Reflection**  
**18 January 2024**  
**Agnes Hutchings, pbvm**  
**5 July 1935 – 10 January 2024**

*Joy is the echo of  
God's life within us  
and sings its song of love  
from that deep place  
where we come forth  
from the creative heart of God.*  
-Blessed Dom Marmion

Agnes, daughter of Margaret Anne Luby and David Hutchings, came forth from the creative heart of God on 5 July 1935 in the picturesque community of Mobile on the Southern Shore. From these early beginnings in an era where home, school and parish were more cohesive than nowadays, Agnes inherited a deep love for her family, her faith, her education and for the natural beauty of her homeland.

Agnes joined the Presentation community on 7 September 1953, made first profession in 1956 receiving the name, Sister Mary Maris Stella and made final commitment to the vowed life on 15 July 1961.

After spending some years teaching in Carbonear, Grand Falls, Renew's and St. John's, her long recuperation after a serious car accident in 1968 moved her in a different direction ministry-wise. From 1973 onwards, Agnes served in a number of ministries – as school counsellor, as Director of a creative initiative, the Project on the Family for the Grand Falls Diocese, as a founding member of The Lantern Christian Life Centre and Team Member and Counsellor there, congregational Formation Director and Pastoral Minister – all diverse engagements, which emphasized personal development and a holistic spirituality.

I would categorize Agnes as first and foremost a seeker, a woman with a thirst for quiet and contemplation, a woman committed to her own personal wellness and growth and a person who enabled others to become their true selves. A touching enclosure in Agnes' personal file contained prayerful tributes from a 12-Steps Spirituality Program which Agnes facilitated at the Lantern – touching affirmations by persons who, while still struggling, were finding a way to make healthy choices towards more fulfilling lives. Gerry Marshall tells a story: A recovering alcoholic drove in from Trinity Bay each week for a counselling session with Agnes. One day when he passed by the office window, he leaned in and said, *"I heard Agnes was a nun one time."* I told him she was still a nun. He swore softly as he said, *"Oh no, I did my fourth step, my moral inventory, with her."* He was horrified until I assured him that the Agnes he knew and trusted was

still the same person. I thought at the time that was the biggest compliment he could have offered Agnes because she was so accepting of him and good at her job.

Agnes was intelligent, she had a wicked sense of humor, was a fantastic Scrabble player and poetry enthusiast whose whole face came alive as she recited a multitude of poems all from memory. And then there was the feisty Agnes. How often did she express her annoyance at a person or situation with her classical expression, *"gimme a break."*

After a Sister's death, when I reflect on her personal files, I find the readings chosen for Anniversary celebrations deeply revealing of the person who chose them. For Agnes' Golden Jubilee in 2006, one reading was from American author, Natalie Goldberg, a practitioner of Zen Buddhism:

*"Whether we know it or not,  
we transmit the presence of everyone  
we have ever known,  
as though by being in each other's presence  
we exchange our cells,  
pass on some of our life force,  
and then we go on,  
carrying that person in our body,  
not unlike springtime,  
when certain plants  
in fields we walk through attach their seeds,  
in the form of small burrs,  
to our socks, our pants, our caps,  
as if to say:  
"Go on, take us with you,  
carry us to root in another place."  
This is how we survive long  
after we are dead!  
That is why it is important  
who we become,  
because we pass it on."*

Agnes, the God to whom you pledged your life called you home on 10 January 2024. Agnes, you will survive long after you are dead because you will live on in the hearts and memories of all who know and love you.

Rest in God's love, dear Agnes.

Betty Rae Lee, pbvm  
Provincial Leader