

Vigil Reflection
Angela McGrath, pbvm
20 December 2023
16 December 1941 – 18 December 2023

by
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*O God, support us all the day long
till the shadows lengthen
and the evening comes
and the busy world is hushed
and the fever of life is over
and our work is done.*

Even though John Henry Newman penned these words early in the 19th century, they are filled with meaning for us today as we remember our dear one.

Angela, *“the fever of life is over, and your work is done.”*

Let us start our remembering at the very beginning when Angela was born to the delight of her parents, John and Margaret (Kelly) McGrath in Freshwater on 16 December 1941. Angela was always aware that she was held in an eternal story of love and self-giving that reached from the smallest corners of her heart to the greatest galaxies in space.

Having lost her Dad when she was just seven years old, Angela was very influenced by her mom and her aunts. She remarks that a strong faith and prayer were important values in her family home. From her early days, Angela inherited a deep love for her faith and her family and valued her beautiful relationship with Mary and Jim and Anna and Brian and their children and grandchildren, a bond that unites them way beyond her earthly death. When speaking of her relatives, she would often say to me with a mixture of admiration and wickedness, *“She’s a real McGrath.”* As I learned more about these formidable McGrath women, I began to understand what she meant. Angela herself was, in many ways, a real McGrath.

Angela joined our community on 4 September 1960, made first profession on 15 July 1963, receiving the name, Sister Mary St. Margaret, in honor of her mom, and made final commitment to the vowed life on 15 July 1968. Just listen to the words of that era when Angela received her ring: *“Receive this ring, Sister Mary St. Margaret as a sign of your fidelity. May you who have vowed to serve Christ bravely persevere even until death.”* Angela’s response was *“I am espoused to Him whom the angels serve and at whose beauty the sun and the moon stand in wonder.”* Despite the theology and language of the day, there are little hints of a spirituality of being in communion. Imagine, the sun and the moon were awestruck by the beauty of the Christ. Angela returned home to God on 18 December 2023.

Angela's ministry as teacher and principal took her to Avondale, Benoit's Cove, Deer Lake, Grand Falls, Mount Carmel, St. John's, Torbay and Witless Bay. In each place she was respected for her spirit of fairness and her love for disadvantaged children. In introducing the McGrath Award for Pastoral Care at St. Peter's Academy, Benoit's Cove, her vice-principal wrote, *"I have witnessed a great number of acts of kindness towards students and teachers alike. I have also witnessed the pain and discomfort that she experienced as a result of standing up for what she believed in or standing up for the rights of others. She lived her beliefs."* Angela also generously assumed other leadership responsibilities as Director of The Lantern, St. Catherine's Renewal Centre, The Gathering Place and the Newfoundland and Labrador Leadership Team, to all of which she brought earnestness and joy.

Warm memories of Angela are being shared by those who are away from home at this time.

Sharon Fagan writes from Ireland: *"I have fond memories of Angela's great organizational skills, her strong work ethic, her integrity and her compassion for those kept poor...One thing we always teased her about was how she always managed to hear things which the rest of us on the team did not get to hear. Angela always had news to tell us."*

Lois Greene who ministers at Nano Nagle's birthplace, writes: *"I am blessed to have known Angela's generosity and friendship for many years."* Aware of the loneliness of not being here at this time, Lois says, *"Home seems far away at the end of a wide ocean."*

And Sherryl White: *"I always enjoyed my conversations with Angela and felt she had her finger on the true pulse of the Motherhouse. I found her gentle and firm and she seemed to hold the respect and affection of the Sisters."*

Angela was a beautiful, sincere person who followed Nano Nagle and the charism and mission of our congregation and who had to the end a gentle presence and a listening ear.

Angela, dear friend, we will miss you.

*God, in your mercy,
grant Angela a safe lodging
and a holy rest
and peace at the last.*