

VIGIL REFLECTION  
Betty Quinlan, pbvm  
26 June 2024

20 December 1943 – 18 June 2024

Betty Rae Lee, pbvm  
Provincial Leader  
NL Unit of Union of Presentation Sisters

Welcome to Betty's Family, especially her beloved brother, Bernard, Betty's group members, Fran and Margie, Sisters, Associates, particularly those from the Avondale area, and Friends.

*Before the very beginning there was an ancient love.  
From the heart of this love, Creation danced into being.*  
CG 2024 Opening Ritual

*And so, we gather in the name of Creation.  
We gather in the name of all that is.*

We gather in the name of an expansive universe dating back to 15 billion years of cosmological time of which Betty's life is a small but significant part.

Betty was born in North Arm, Holyrood, on 20 December 1943, the pride and joy of her parents, Bride and Cornelius Quinlan, the youngest of twelve children. As the youngest child, Betty was understandably adored by her older siblings.

Her parents nurtured her faith and later supported her decision to enter religious life. Betty had great regard for the Presentation Sisters who came to Gander when she was in Grade 8 and was especially fond of her mentor, Sister Brendan, who also encouraged her vocation.

Betty joined our community on 8 September 1961, made first vows in 1964 receiving the name, Sister Mary Cornelius, in honor of her Dad. She made final profession in 1969 where she pledged wholehearted dependence on God, committed to seek Christ with an undivided heart and to do God's will through prayer and discernment.

Betty died on 18 June 2024 in the year of her Diamond Jubilee as a Presentation Sister.

As we gather today to celebrate Betty's life, we are mindful of the times her compassionate presence brought joy to others. Betty became a Presentation Sister just before the Second Vatican Council and she sought to live the words of Gaudiam et Spes: *"to make her own the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of God"*. Mary Oliver, in her poem, *The*

*Messenger*, writes that “*her work is loving the world.*” In Betty’s work of loving the world, she had great devotion to our foundress, Nano Nagle, and followed her example as she served others.

Betty’s vivacious involvement in ministry as teacher, catechist, pastoral counsellor and volunteer took her to Avondale, Brent’s Cove, Carbonear, Gander, Holyrood, Mount Pearl, Piccadilly, Port au Port, Stephenville Crossing, St. Bride’s, St. George’s, St. John’s, Torbay and Windsor, a veritable map of the island of Newfoundland. She developed the community school concept at St. John Vianney in Piccadilly, a program that united students, families, community agencies and Church in fostering care for the whole child. She also initiated a school breakfast program there where, with the assistance of 50 parents and the junior high students, approximately 100 students received a full breakfast each morning. She was recognized for this initiative by the Appalachia School Board in Stephenville.

Betty had an infectious laugh and caused us all to laugh a lot. She could also take great joy in laughing at herself. A couple of stories: In the Novitiate when Betty was cleaning the elevator, she noticed with consternation that the same spot was on each of the three floors of the elevator. Another time, Betty was in the waiting room of a medical clinic and paid a lot of attention to a young boy who was there with his mother. At one point, the mother asked Betty how many children she had. Betty enthusiastically replied, “I have twenty-six.”

A teacher in St Bride’s described Betty as “a comrade true and full of glee, who dares to laugh out loud and free. “

As in any life, Betty also experienced darkness and pain amidst times of hurt and misunderstanding. While her journey into dementia was difficult for Betty and for all who loved her, there were many days when she still had her effervescent smile.

So, Betty, it is now time to say farewell now in the words of Irish poet, John O’Donohue for:

*You now dwell in that safe place in our hearts  
where no storm or night or pain can reach you.*

*And as you move from here,  
may you continue to inspire us  
to enter each day with a generous heart,  
until we see your beautiful face again  
in that land when there is no more separation  
where all tears will be wiped from our minds  
and where we will never lose you again.*

Rest in joyful peace, dear Betty.

