

VIGIL REFLECTION

22 August 2024

Patrice Bourgeois, pbvm
8 February 1936 – 11 September 2024

Betty Rae Lee, pbvm
Province Leader
Presentation Sisters (NL)

Welcome Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends of our dear Sister Patrice Bourgeois, especially her nieces and her good friend, Mary Bourgeois. We gather today to celebrate Patrice's life and to remember her many acts of loving kindness.

Patrice's earthly journey began in Kippens on our beautiful West Coast when Mary Gladys was born on 8 February 1936 to her parents, Elizabeth White and John Bourgeois. Gladys joined our community on 8 December 1957, made first profession in 1960 and final profession in 1965. Her name in religion was Sister Marie Patrice.

Patrice's ministry as teacher and volunteer took her to Benoit's Cove, Cape St. George, Carbonear, Deer Lake, Grand Falls, Piccadilly, Port au Port, Stephenville. St. John's and Windsor. She also spent several years as Assistant Administrator at Presentation House providing a caring environment for young children and as Financial Assistant at Xavier House and Presentation Provincialate.

When Patrice celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 2010 with her companions from entrance, Carmelita MacNeil, Paulette Nugent and Patricia Whittle, their entrance hymn was the Cantic of the Sun which praises all the elements of creation, an introduction to a love story of God's abundance that Patrice claimed and lived. Patrice was a true lover of nature who believed that:

*"The heavens are telling the glory of God
and all creation is shouting for joy.
Come, dance in the forest,
Come, play in the field,
And sing, sing to the glory of our God."*

For their 50th celebration, they chose readings that are evocative of Old and New Testaments values.

Using a more contemporary translation of Jeremiah 29:11-14 from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson, we find consoling words like:

"I'll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home."

And Psalm 33:

*"We're depending on God
who has everything we need.
What's more, our hearts brim with joy
since we've taken for our own God's holy name.
Love us, O God with all you've got –
that's what we're depending on."*

John 15: 1-17

*"This is my command:
Love one another the way I loved you.
This is the very best way to love.
Put your life in the line for your friends.
You are my friends
when you do the things I command you.
Remember the root command:
Love one another."*

These readings for a celebration of fidelity to the vowed life over the long years culminated in their re-commitment in these words:

May I so live that
awe and wonder continue
to awaken within me
as I embrace the relation
that is mine with the whole creation.

Through the vow of poverty
may the spirit of reverence
for every difference
fill my life.

Through the vow of chastity
may the desire for communion
motivate my life.

Through the vow of obedience
may I continue to give birth
to my creative being,
that right relationship will flourish
for the whole creation.
In our time.

We've all heard that good stuff comes in small packages.

In many ways, Patrice was an impish French leprechaun who used her quick wit and dry humor to entertain and to admonish, all as appropriate to the occasion.

She was also a financial wizard who delighted in doing her work thoroughly and quickly and who, with a twinkle in her eyes, was quick to correct Wendy and Roisin if she perceived they had made a mistake.

We have many wonderful memories of Patrice's time with us as Financial Assistant. Just the day before her fall when we met in the corridor as she was leaving for the day. She said, "Are you leaving now?" I said, "shortly" and she replied. "Well, I'll turn off the lights now and spare you the trouble." Patrice in many ways spared us a lot of trouble and made a huge contribution to our Unit.

The suddenness of her illness was a huge shock, yet her suffering is over now and she is in a better place. The God that Patrice loved and served has shown up, taken care of her and brought her back home for all eternity.

Rest in God's peace, dear Patrice.