

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER BRENDAN LYNCH

February 25, 1931 – November 6, 2025

by Roisin Gannon, pbvm

PBVM NL Unit Leader

November 2025

“Sing to the mountains; sing to the sea...”

Bob Dufford, sj

Brendan is not only singing to the mountains, she is conducting the choirs of angels!

Sr. Brendan Lynch was born in Windsor on 25th February 1931, to Agnes Shea and Patrick Lynch. She was christened Gertrude Mary in St. Joseph's Parish. Her mother Agnes sadly died when Brendan was only 8 years old. There were three children left to be raised by Mr. Lynch....Dominic, Mary and Gertrude (Brendan). Some years later Mr. Lynch, Patrick, married Ellen who became known as Nell. Together Nell and Patrick had 11 children. So in all there were 14 Lynch's!

Brendan had the most unique, wonderful gift of music. She imbibed in her pupils such a love of music that they soon began to realize that “Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.”
- Confucius

Brendan was well known for her top-class beautiful choirs. She was a genius! She founded and was the Choral Director of the famed St. Patrick's School Girls' Choir.....The Glee Club. 85 voices, and for thirteen years won the hearts of both their audiences and the men and women who adjudicated their performances. One adjudicator used two words to sum up their performance: “consummate artistry”, and recommended them for the National Arts Centre under the auspices of the Canadian Federation of Music Festivals.

In March 1973, Brendan was invited to take her Girls' Choir to Ottawa for an appearance at the Canadian Music Educators' Association Convention. The choir received rave reviews and was acclaimed by these top musicians

as “the highlight of the convention” and was of such a high quality that it provoked numerous letters of commendation. One such letter from the Minister of Education to his counterpart here in NL, Hon. Gerald Ottenheimer, stated “this choir... sang with the quality and sincerity of children and with the polish and style of professional singers. I have never enjoyed choral singing more, nor ever seen an audience of musicians and music educators so visibly moved”. Two years later, this choir won the Leslie Bell trophy in National Competition, which honours the most outstanding Children’s School Choir in Canada.

After St. John’s Brendan was transferred to Brent’s Cove, Harbour Breton, and St. Albans, respectively, where she again formed choirs. They competed in the Kiwanis Music Festival and won top awards and were recommended to compete in the National level for the Matheison Trophy.

Sister Brendan has left a unique legacy of music. The Kiwanis Music Festival Association of St. John’s inducted her into the Festival Hall of Honour in the Music Category.

Brendan was the most unassuming woman I have ever met. Her talent for music was special, unique ... we all knew that ... but did she ever boast of the awards? No ... I chatted with Brendan often about music and song ... never did she talk of her accolades. She was a simple woman who loved teaching choirs, imparting her love and appreciation of music to all her pupils everywhere. Some of her past pupils sang her along her journey in the last number of days. Some are here this evening, faithful to the very end. St. Patrick’s girls claimed Brendan as their own and certainly have honoured and loved her over many years. How many times have I heard Jacinta Mackay Graham in her direction of the Basilica choir quoting Brendan “Open your mouths ... Sr. Brendan always said and demonstrated to us 4 fingers mouths”!! Brendan’s personal file, which we have here, reads many letters of appreciation and awe of her choirs ... one such compares her choir THE GLEE CLUB, ST. PATRICK’S to the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. This highly gifted, talented, generous woman was so unassuming. We are told that Pride is one of the deadly sins ... who cares?! ... we are truly proud to celebrate this wonderful Presentation Sister, Brendan.

Stravinsky is reputed to have said: “I haven’t understood a bar of music in my life, but I have felt it.” — Brendan, like Stravinsky truly felt every note of music.

Shakespeare in his Play **Twelfth Night** says: “If music be the food of love, play on”. Brendan loved her God and our Presentation Congregation ... the food of her spirituality was music. She lived the Presentation Way of life for 67 years, committing herself to the charism of Nano. This is surely a life of commitment and dedication to our mission in Newfoundland and to the world. Brendan taught in Placentia, Corner Brook, Gander, St. Patrick’s, Harbour Breton, Brent’s Cove, St. Albans, Windsor; She volunteered teaching music in St. Alban’s and eventually in the Parish there, as she did in Avondale.

After hearing all of the above it is an understatement to say that Brendan loved music! Brendan lived music. Brendan prayed music

“I have a Dream”... the song composed and sung by Abba, with which we are all so familiar, was one of Brendan’s favourites.

I have a dream
A song to sing
To help me cope
With anything
If you see the wonder
Of a fairy tale
You can take the future
Even if you fail

[Chorus]
I believe in angels
Something good in everything I see
I believe in angels
When I know the time is right for me
I'll cross the stream
I have a dream

No life is perfect! Brendan’s mechanism was to sing through difficulties, if not out loud...in her heart. She believed in Angels.....she believed the Angels were waiting to welcome her, to sing her home, and when she

reached her new life among the Angels....I think conductor Angel became redundant ... Brendan just said..."move over Conductor.....I can do this."!!!!!!

Hearing so many stories about Brendan over the past few days has brought me to confirm that Brendan was a true Presentation Sister, a true daughter of Nano Nagle. Everything she did was for the students ... competitions entered and trophies won were not only for the love of singing but for the building up of the confidence of each child, to help each child feel good, so that the future would be brighter knowing I SANG, I WON. Yes...Brendan had a dream...the same dream that Nano Nagle had. Both Nano and Brendan fulfilled that dream.....Nano leaving a legacy of education in its broad sense, and Brendan leaving a legacy of music in its broad sense too.

Brendan you have crossed the stream now. We thank you for enriching our lives in so many ways ... music, philosophy of life, singing, dreaming, praying, embodying Nano for us. Now that you are singing in the heaven we ask you to sing along with us and guide us in all the ways we need. Sometimes we won't have the notes to sing, or we will be off pitch ... so sing for us...let us hear the music of Angels ... and until we meet again may God and Nano hold us all in the palm of their hands. God bless you Brendan...thank you for the music... we will miss you.