

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER MARY DOROTHY HUBER

December 30, 1926—March 7, 2015

Sister Mary Dorothy, loved and loving daughter and sister of the Oscar and Christine Kline Huber family, dedicated Sister of Charity for sixty-five years, always alert to the Cry of the Poor, is in Heaven and, no doubt, she wishes we could be with her to enjoy the surprises she is experiencing. In 1985, Sister Mary Dorothy was studying to become a hospital chaplain. To complete the course, one of the requirements was to submit an autobiography. This morning, I will present a segment of her life story to you.



I was born on December 30, 1926, the sixth child of Oscar Norbert and Christine Marie Kline Huber. I was baptized Adelaide Catherine on January 2, 1927, at Holy Rosary Church, Juniata, Altoona, Pennsylvania. My parents were from the mountains—my father from Carrolltown, Pennsylvania, and my mother from Nicktown, Pennsylvania. They built a home on a seven-acre farm in Juniata Gap in Altoona where most of us were born and reared. We were a family of parents, seven girls, and five boys; and we were a close family—Dorothy, Eddie, Morgan, Mary, Wilfred (Boots), Adelaide, Leroy, Eleanor, Dolores, Bernice, Joe, Olean. Edward, my oldest brother, at the age of seventeen, was run over by a neighbor's truck and died the next day, June 19, 1936. I remember my father going up to our orchard and sobbing aloud in his grief, and this experience left a deep impression on me.

I started public elementary school at the age of five years and was then privileged to attend Altoona Catholic High School. It was there that I discovered different communities of women religious in the Church. It was during high school, I thought that I would like to become a sister. Following high school, I worked for an adjustment company for five and one-half years, but after that period of time, I felt that I had to answer the call to religious life or I would never do so. With the help of family members (Sister James Louise Krug was my cousin), I was able to get in touch with the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill who had taught me in high school. Sister Rita Catherine Cole sponsored me. On January 1, 1950, several members of my family accompanied me by train to Seton Hill, the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill.

I adjusted rather well to living in community. The first year and one-half was filled with attending college classes and classes on spirituality, helping with our sisters in the infirmary, and being responsible for certain charges in addition to enjoying recreation time. However, in my second year of novitiate, I was sent to Saint Stephen School in Hazelwood, Pittsburgh, to teach 60 fifth grade children! I'm not sure how much I taught them; it seemed that I was the one being taught.

After pronouncing my First Vows in 1952, I was assigned to the Seton Hill College Bookstore as manager, a position I held until 1976. During this time, I worked for my bachelor's degree in European history with a minor in English. I received my degree in 1963 by taking classes during the academic year, summer sessions, and Saturday classes. I traveled each Sunday, for about five years, to the local state correctional institution for Mass with the inmates, and then I visited with them. At the same time, I began a "Project Hunger" after viewing the film, *Hunger in America*. I, along with others, made all sorts of craft items and had a Christmas sale. We used the money to buy food for needy families in our local community. Each year, interest grew and many of our college and faculty members would make contributions of handmade items for our sale. This Project continues to the present day. I also had the happy privilege of being sacristan at Seton Hill for about five years. I thought I would die doing bookstore ministry but in 1976, I was assigned to Bishop Guilfoyle High School to be the Service Program Coordinator and to help with retreats. We asked our students to contribute some time to assist patients in hospitals and I thought I should get some hospital experience myself. I asked and was given permission to pursue Clinical Pastoral Education and then my ministry of Pastoral Care at Mercy Hospital, Altoona began. I was a pastoral minister from 1986 until 1995, when I entered a sabbatical experience. From that year-long absence, I returned and ministered at the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Johnstown, Pennsylvania until 2000, when I suffered a stroke and returned to Greensburg to take up residence, first at Doran Hall and then Caritas Christi. During this time, I volunteered in the crafts department and made quilts for the children of Honduras.

A heartbreaking event occurred in the life of my family, when our parents, after instilling in their children the Catholic faith, chose to leave our Church and join a community of individuals in Canada who did not accept our Holy Father as

Pope. They left home in 1967, to make a three-week retreat but never returned except for one visit in 1968. Family members visited them in 1968 and 1969 prior to my father's death in 1969. When he died and was buried in Canada, we hoped our mother would come back to Altoona to be with us, but it was not to be. She returned to Canada and lived for ten more years, dying in 1979. Severe weather prohibited us from attending her funeral as we had for our father, ten years earlier. I take solace in the words of Elizabeth Seton, "It is a sweet thought to dwell on that those I most tenderly love; love God and if we do not meet again here, in heaven we shall be separated no more."

While reflecting on my own long life, I think of the words of Saint Paul to the Corinthians: "Praised be God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation. He comforts us in all our afflictions and thus enables us to comfort those who are in trouble, with the same consolation we have received from Him. As we have shared much in the suffering of Christ, so through Christ do we share abundantly in His consolation." I have received much comfort in my life and because of this blessing that I have tried to be available to attend to the needs of others.

I remember two statements that have helped me over the years. One was from my dear mother, "We are who we are in God's sight, no more, no less;" and this reflection from an elderly retreat master, "Sister, go peacefully and quietly about your Father's business, and quietly and peacefully you will go straight up."

Before I do leave you now, lovingly and quietly, in the peace of Christ, I want to express my gratitude to all for the care and love I experienced during my years of diminishment, especially to Sister Marie Clare Farabaugh, whose attention and patience were immeasurable in the true spirit of a Sister of Charity.

"Who can bind the Soul which God sets free?"

~ Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

Adapted and edited from Sister Mary Dorothy Huber's autobiography and presented by Sister Mary Halloran at the Funeral Mass on March 10, 2015.