

In Memoriam

Sister Regina Brunelle

April 9, 1933 - December 18, 2016

Sister Anne Marie Liston

“Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home...” and quietly, without fanfare or fuss our dear Sister Regina left us for home. Perhaps an analogy with a sunrise or a butterfly would be more aesthetic or appealing, but somehow the ladybug, as we call it, seems to fit better. A few years before Regina left Lincoln County, West Virginia, she called the Whitesville Community in great excitement, and a little consternation. It seems that with the spring the native insect population had awakened, and awakened her, as well. A large horde of ladybugs had invaded her roof, and dropping down gently upon her bed, had made themselves at home. We tried to be sympathetic and supportive, and not laugh at the vision before us, but it was hard. If there was one trait we all knew Regina possessed, it was her skill at housekeeping. Each and every ladybug was a personal affront to her way of life. And so, for many years after we delighted in giving her reminders of her favorite insect.

Regina, or Lois as she was baptized, was born on April 9, 1933, in Nashua, N.H. Her parents, Francis and Olivette Brunelle, had two older children, Lorraine and Francis. Those were the depression years and jobs were hard to find. The memories of those years implanted in Lois a sense of value for the hard work and dedication of her loving parents, as well as a concern for all who struggled to meet the ordinary needs of life. A concern that would show itself over and over throughout her religious life. Growing up in a Franco-American family gave Lois the linguistic ability that would serve her well in the years ahead.

On June 13, 1953, Lois and two other postulants entered the newly opened Cluny Novitiate on Brenton Road in Newport, Rhode Island. Active in many activities in high school and a natural leader, Lois did not find novitiate life “a walk in the park”, but struggled to be faithful to the call. Her deep love and admiration of Anne-Marie Javouhey helped her through the struggle. After First Profession on February 2, 1956, she began studies at Salve Regina College, graduating in 1960. She taught at Cluny School in Newport during her years as a Junior Professed until after making Final Profession on August 15, 1962. In September of that year she began teaching at Little Flower Catholic



Sister Regina of the Trinity Brunelle

High School for Girls in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On weekends and summer months she studied for her Masters in English at Villanova University. All the while she still harbored the hope that she would someday “go to the missions”.

Finally, in June of 1968 Lois left for her mission to Haiti. Here she would teach English as a second language in one of our schools and spend her weekends assisting an elderly sister in the infirmary and traveling to a medical clinic at Furcy in the mountains above Port au Prince. This was, in her words, “a magical place for me.”

In 1974, she received the request to return to the United States to prepare to become Formation Director in the American Novitiate. She continued this ministry for nine years in Newport and then in Hamilton, Ontario.

In August of 1985, after a year of caring for her elderly mother, Lois began another “mission” adventure. This time it was to the people of Lincoln County, WV. With the same whole-hearted enthusiasm that marked all she did, she learned community organizing and building low income housing. She fed the poor, found help for the elderly and sick, addressed the injustices of the disadvantaged, earned a degree in counseling so she could also exercise that ministry among the poor, and she did it all with the good humor and grace that was part of her essence. Seventeen years in Appalachia, and she loved it all! Her work and spirit still

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