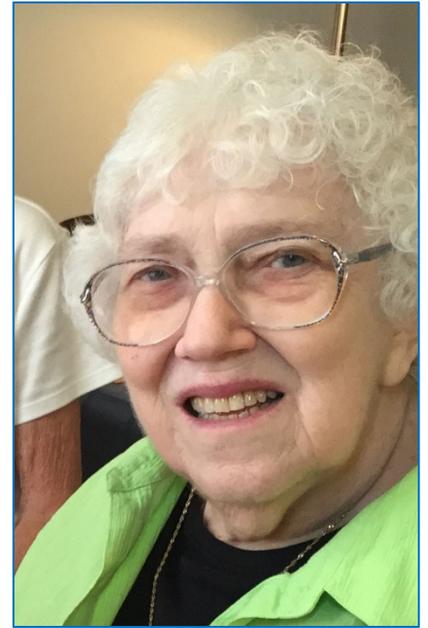


Sister Barbara Nesbihal

Entered eternal life on May 16, 2017

I have the opportunity and the privilege of knowing and loving a great woman. Sister Barbara Nesbihal. I hear similar statements from others as well. I dare say, each of you has personal recollections of Barbara that you will treasure in your heart. Today, I will simply share a few memories and insights.

I believe that Barbara is a blessing in my life, in our lives...and she will continue to be....a blessing, and an example of how to live in this world. Her love for us and for others is obvious, constant, unconditional, and boundless. It does not take long for Barbara to 'connect' with people, to be a sign of God's love in their lives. She makes a lasting impression, even after brief encounters with strangers. This was true, too, throughout her darkest, most difficult days these last couple of months in and out of healthcare facilities. People are attracted to her spirit, her smile, her good-heartedness.



There are lyrics in her favorite Simon & Garfunkel song dating back to the 1970's, that spoke to Barbara, a metaphor, if you will, for her mission on this earth as Sister of Charity: Let me quote: "When you're weary, feeling small, when tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all. I'm on your side when times get rough and friends just can't be found, like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down, like a bridge over troubled water I will lay me down" And, countless times, in countless ways, with countless numbers of children and adults.... Sister Barbara did just that.

Born in Hawthorne NJ, Barbara grew up in Jersey City and served the people of Jersey City as teacher and then Principal for over 60 years. Her first assignment was Saint Mary's elementary school where she ministered to many economically disadvantaged children and, therein, she found her calling. She moved uptown to the Academy of Saint Aloysius elementary school, where she taught first grade for several years. Saturdays and summers, however, were spent downtown again where she set up programs for kids in need of tutoring and recreational activities.

I met Barbara at the Academy where we shared a desire to minister to God's poor. In 1969, both of us, along with Sister Maryanne Van Note were assigned to Saint Bridget's School. Barbara was a tireless worker and under her leadership, the school was a joyous space in which to teach and learn. Someone once described the parish and school as "The Smile on Montgomery Street". Indeed it was! We ministered together for over 30 years; we lived together for 48!

During the early years, there was a large scale urban renewal project around us. Subsidized housing was to replace abandoned buildings and empty lots. This meant that hundreds of our neighbors would be displaced and scattered throughout the city. Barbara, along with lawyers and staff worked for months in the basement of the Convent. After several, laborious meetings with developers and city officials they were able to bring an unprecedented number of former residents back to the area to enjoy the new housing. **SISTER BARBARA... ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE.**

As we sisters in the convent grew smaller in number there were many empty bedrooms. It was Barbara's idea to create a 'ministry of hospitality' where we would invite women or women with children in need of a place to stay ...for a couple of nights...a couple of months, years or as with one woman, 10 years! Stories abound about this time in our lives.; all are poignant, and some, quite hair-raising. Barbara, more than the rest of us,

welcomed our guests, counseled them, and helped them move forward with their lives. SISTER BARBARA ...
SOCIAL WORKER

One woman, Egyptian and eight months pregnant was recommended to us for assistance. She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl and they shared our home for four years before acquiring an apartment at the end of our block. Quite suddenly, the mother became ill and died overnight. Again, it was Barbara who took the leap of faith the next morning and brought little Adele, age seven, back to our Convent to raise as our own with all the love and care we could possibly provide. For those here who know us well, it was then that Barbara was affectionally nicknamed 'Barbie' by our little girl... andwho knew? The name stuck! Life goes on and now we (especially Barbara) are proud parents and grandparents of four, with one more on the way. SISTER BARBARA... MOTHER/GRANDMOTHER.

In 1999, Saint Bridget's Parish and school merged with other nearby entities to become Resurrection Parish and School and Sister Barbara, along with Sister Eleanor Uhl, co-principals, founded and developed the first of its' kind, A Peaceable School, (there are now three). This initiative was expanded in a family-like atmosphere with a focus on growth in the virtues and in peacemaking behavior. SISTER BARBARA... PEACEMAKING PIONEER.

In 2013, Resurrection Peaceable School transitioned to Saint Joseph School, (our new Peaceable School), where Sister Barbara, our Peace Director, also reached out to benefactors to subsidize tuition for needy families. She found a welcoming, caring community in this her most recent ministry.

Sister Barbara was not all work and no play. Barbara enjoyed hosting parties, so many, for Christmas, birthdays and lesser occasions. She was chief decorator, lead dancer and generous gift giver. Unlike many of us, she truly enjoyed shopping in the malls to find the perfect present. It was a 'shop til you drop' mentality! Her favorite trips were to see my family, the Rattigans in Boston, who became her adopted family after she lost her father, sister and mother during the 1980's. Trips were often punctuated by side trips to the casino, a detour along the way. One might call that 'Barbara's guilty pleasure!'

Sister Barbara was legendary in downtown Jersey City for traditions around holiday time, spanning over 40 years. Every Thanksgiving, complete turkey dinners were provided to neighbors near and far. The highlight for Sister Barbara and the most fun was the annual Christmas Toy Sale. Thousands of new and used toys were collected by the truckload and distributed, on one glorious evening, to parents who could then make Christmas special for their children.

Barbara's spirituality was deep but also very simply stated: love God; love others. I asked her once how she could be so kind, so loving to so many and especially to those who are difficult to like. She said she strives to look at each person in her life the same way that God looks at each of us, that is, with abiding love. Also, she was devoted to the 'three ladies:' Mother Mary, Elizabeth Seton, and Miriam Teresa. Barbara prayed to them to intercede, daily and she also prayed specifically for people with serious illnesses.

Barbara wanted so much to live and struggled for over seven years, coping with cancer, its treatments and side effects with dignity and grace and always a smile. The Sisters of Charity whom she loves and who love her, sustained her during this time, as did a multitude of dear friends, and acquaintances. She would want me to thank you for all of the prayers, prayers that were answered and that gave her a quality of life for such a long time.

Now, she moves on to spend time with the God she loves, the three 'ladies' and another three: her Dad, Chris, her Mom, Ida and her sister Ruthie. But, I doubt that she will ever be far from those of us who are counting on her love and support going forward.

Thank you Barbara, Barbie, for your kinship, for the reflection of God's love that you are, for the lessons we have learned from you, for often being our bridge over troubled water. As we remember you, may we be that bridge for others.

It occurred to me: You will no longer need the Peaceable School prayer reminder that you, Sister Eleanor and Fr. Greg gave to us: *Make a God filled day! For all your days now will be God-filled, as you: walk, talk, and live, in the peace of Christ... forever.*

Sister Mary Anne Rattigan