

## **Sister Diane Collesano**

Entered eternal life on May 25, 2017

Diane's favorite song was "Jerusalem, My Destiny". She sang it with great gusto; it didn't matter whether she sang it in key or not! It was the recessional song of our 25th jubilee and we will sing it tonight as well - and she made it quite clear that we are to sing EVERY verse!

There was a reason why Diane loved to belt out this song: she believed in its message with every cell of her being! She knew that Jerusalem was her destiny from her earliest years; this belief and trust matured and deepened in each decade of her life.

There's no doubt that Diane lived her life out loud and in double time with dynamism, energy, and passion! She had zip in her step, volume in her voice, quickness in her mind, and profound depth in her spirit.



### **Zip in her step:**

Diane and I met in college but began our adult friendship as novices where, in the second half of the year, we spent our weekly ministry day volunteering for Bread for the World which was then located in Union Square in NYC. Our sponsor, Sister Anne Kelly, had instilled in us a commitment to advocacy on behalf of world hunger. It was on those and many other trips to NY and elsewhere that I learned that I had to take two steps for every one of Diane's swift strides.

Her speedy step was matched only by her lead foot! Needless to say, she was usually the driver in order to get us places faster! And did she travel! From the House of Prayer in NY to the Folcolare in Hyde Park; from the beaches at Harvey Cedars to the Chesapeake Bay at Faulkner Retreat House in Maryland. She thought nothing of driving (or should I say, flying) to Pittsburgh or Florida anytime of the day or night. I'm not sure that any car could contain her yen to travel, her curiosity to learn, and her desire to connect.

### **Volume in her voice:**

Diane's energetic step was paralleled with her enthusiastic voice. Now, I wouldn't want to have been her mother or her teacher, and I think Edna was exhausted at the end of our novitiate year! But Diane could express her thoughts and insights in an incredibly articulate way. This enabled her to be a gifted teacher and sought-after speaker especially for our Congregation and Associates.

I believe Diane identified with the prayer of Jesus that we heard in the Gospel reading tonight. In it Jesus prays "for those who will believe...through their word." Throughout her educational ministry, especially here at the College of Saint Elizabeth, Diane continued the teaching mission of Jesus, enabling others to believe through her words. She could truly say, "I made known to them your name."

Diane's well-volumed voice also made it clear who was in charge: whether in the classroom as teacher or in the school as principal. And what a principal she was as she poured herself into the ministry, upending enrollments, creating curriculum, mentoring teachers, and transforming the lives of students! Her endless energy brought new life to the educational ministry of the Sisters of Charity, particularly at the Academy of Saint Elizabeth, St. Paul's in Clifton, Sacred Heart Academy in Hoboken and Marylawn in South Orange.

### **Quickness in her mind:**

Not only did Diane have zip in her step, she also had quickness in her mind. She read books faster than anyone I knew! While I meandered through a book or two on our vacations at Harvey Cedars, she would fly through a shopping bag of paperbacks that she bought at the local used book store. Her extroverted personality and quick mind always kept her strides (not just steps) ahead her students, a quality particularly valuable to a principal.

And her clear mindedness made her a very effective teacher and lecturer. Diane could express our Vincentian-Setonian charism and spirituality in a most articulate way.

### **Depth in her spirit:**

Diane's quick mind was fed from deep within by a spirit always in search of the Way, the Truth, and the Light. As we heard in our first reading, "The Lord is good to the one who seeks the Lord." This still point in her served as a counterpoint to her somewhat frenetic and peripatetic life of ministry. She sought the oneness with God that Jesus speaks of in tonight's Gospel: "That they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you and me." This search for unity with God found fulfillment in a life of Charity as Diane saw and served the face of Jesus in each student, colleague, and sister and brother in her life, including her beloved oncologist, Dr. Radovich and the many health professionals and sisters who served her.

For many years Diane had a deep desire to study theology. For over two decades it was a deferred dream as she served in several schools as teacher and then principal. Once she was able to step away from the educational leadership ministry to study theology, her thirst for knowledge was almost unquenchable. Diane poured herself into learning, both at the College of Saint Elizabeth and at Duquesne University. Later she shared from this deep wellspring of knowledge through her teaching at the College and lecturing in the Congregation, the Sisters of Charity Federation, formation programs, and parishes. It was in these years that I believe her many gifts coalesced into an organic whole and we all benefited in countless ways.

Zip in her step...volume in her voice...quickness in her mind...depth in her spirit. Diane lived her life out loud and in double time. She was far ahead of us and has already run the good race, bounding into the arms of the God she loved so deeply and sought with all her heart. I believe in many ways that Diane personified the Vincentian virtue of ZEAL.

As followers of St. Vincent de Paul, Sisters of Charity are led by five Vincentian virtues which we name as humility, simplicity, charity, mortification, and zeal. The virtue of zeal is the fire of love; it is a persevering, faithful love – an unquenchable flame. Zeal doesn't burn out, rather it is the eternal flame of the love of God within and among us. To quote St. Vincent: "If the love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame."

Diane was filled with zeal and was a clear manifestation of this Vincentian virtue in our midst. She loved being a Sister of Charity with every cell of her being. She had a profound understanding of our charism, a deep passion for the mission, and endless energy in ministry.

So there's a comet zipping through the heavens these days, sparked by the fire of Charity and the zeal of its flame, continuing to inspire as well as challenge us from any complacency we might have. Diane has left us a legacy; let us continue to give it our all!

Sister Ellen Dauwer