



Sister Francis Devlin

Entered eternal life on September 16, 2016

In September of 1958, four courageous and joy-filled Sisters of Charity opened the doors of what was the old Panzer College building and welcomed approximately ninety young teenagers to the new East Orange Catholic High School, better known as EOCH. These four women were: Sr. Grace Michaella, Sr. Frances Carmella, Sr. Thomas Loyola, and Sr. Francis Joannes. Each sister had special gifts to share with us, and shared they did. They not only started a great high school, but in my mind a terrific family.

Sr. Francis Joannes was a special part of this family. She had a unique ability to listen to every girl and see the good qualities that each of us had. She worked at helping us realize these qualities, and encouraged us to bring them to the surface and let them grow. She found in me the gift of song and

challenged me to share this with others. She met each of us on our own level and helped us see how special we were.

The sisters shared so much of their own space with us as well. One special place was the little chapel in the Convent area. They told us we could visit whenever we wanted - and so I did. One day I stopped in before going home. Sr. Francis called me into the sacristy. I thought she needed help. "Not now", she said, "but come back tomorrow and I'll have a job for you." Right then and there, I became the official school sacristan for the next four years. This started my thoughts and journey to Convent and a special friendship with Sr. Francis. I always felt she had known my thoughts about entering the Convent before I expressed them.

Besides teaching literature that first year, she was our music teacher. She loved to sing, and shared this love with all of us. Years later, we would talk about those great times and the special songs that meant so much. She would tell the sisters in the Villa that she taught me how to sing - and she certainly did! She gave me the confidence to share that love with my students and others.

Sister had many friends, but one in particular always comes to mind. That was Sr. Alice Perpetua. I met her that first year in EOCH. Sr. Alice taught at Holy Name, East Orange. Sr. Francis and I would walk to Holy Name to get supplies for the sacristy. We would always stop to visit Sr. Alice. They were true friends, and I know Sr. Francis has missed her.

Sister Francis loved her family and would often talk about all of you as if I knew each of you personally. She was so proud of the beautiful family collage that hung in her room, and would name everyone in it.

During these last few years, I could see how she was suffering. Whenever I asked her how she was, she would say "I'm fine", and with a wink and a smile continue to ask me how the children in school were, and if I was singing with them.

Well, Sister, I am happy to say I am still singing with them, and now 58 years later you are still singing in my mind and my heart.

Sister Alice Neef