

# **Sister Maureen Patrice, CSC**

(Margaret O’Keeffe)

April 5, 1927–December 27, 2021

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**These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Rachel Anne Callahan, CSC. Sister M. Adria (Connors), CSC, read them at Sister Maureen Patrice’s funeral on January 4, 2021.**

“This is the message we have heard from Jesus Christ and proclaim to you: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness.” (1 John 1:5)

How fitting are these words from the first letter of St. John, the reading on the day of Maureen’s death. Our dear Maureen will never dwell in darkness again.

The last time I saw Maureen was in June, curled up in bed. It was such a contrast from the Maureen I knew before she came to Saint Mary’s due to a debilitating illness that eventually robbed her of herself. Her obituary captures the bare facts of a life well lived in many kinds of service, but it cannot evoke those twinkling eyes and almost impish smile and her extraordinary generosity.

I didn’t get to know Maureen until the 1970s when I lived with her bandmate and friend, Sister Miriam Andre (Williams), CSC. For a while, we lived in the Strathmore Mansion in Kensington, Maryland. Maureen shared some funny tales about her cooking days at the old Saint Angela Hall in Kensington when it was the Eastern Provincial House. Any of us lucky enough to have tasted her cooking can testify to her skill in that domain. Even as superior at the new Saint Angela’s, she was never far from the kitchen. And when she or Miriam needed a break, they were ever ready to tool up Rockville Pike to do a little shopping. Not being much of a shopper myself, it took me some time to realize that when they spoke about Tuesday Morning they were not talking about the day of the week but about a store.

In the late 1970s, the aunt who raised me had to relocate from our home in Massachusetts to Sacred Heart Nursing Home in Hyattsville, Maryland. Until the day she died, Sisters Maureen, Miriam, Alice Condon and Catherine Lash were faithful visitors. Maureen practiced pastoral visiting well before it was her full-time ministry at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Bethesda. She flourished in that ministry and made many good friends.

She was very much loved by my family—even present at my uncle’s funeral, where we discovered that our pastor, who had given my uncle his last rites, turned out to be a cousin on her mother’s side, a coincidence which was strangely comforting.

In 1982, Maureen, Miriam and I enjoyed a trip to Ireland. While she had regularly visited family over the years, she had not had the opportunity to travel to other parts of the country. It was June, the rhododendrons in full blossom and the weather perfect. Leon Uris’s book about Ireland is well named *A Terrible Beauty*; I remember standing on a hill looking over the Lakes of Killarney and asking Maureen how she could have stood leaving such a beautiful place. She looked at me and said, “Well, dear, you can’t eat beauty.” And then she explained that her brother Timmy, who was leaving home with her, had thrown his travel papers into the fireplace the night before they left and she snatched them out before they burned. Emigration was hard. She spoke about the signs that were then still displayed in some parts of Boston, “No Irish need apply.” She loved her own large family deeply and was especially proud of Timmy’s daughter Sheila. When we visited her family in Ireland, it was clear how much they loved her. Especially memorable was the visit to Boherbue, the village where the family farm was located. At the time, Maureen was superior at St. Angela’s. At one point, I was alone in the kitchen with her brothers, and Paddy asked, “What do she be doing there anyway?” Hard pressed for an answer, I was greatly relieved when Maureen and Miriam came back into the kitchen. All in all, it was a magical time of meeting her family, staying in warmly hospitable B&Bs, and overdosing on beauty.

When Miriam moved to Saint Mary's, she asked Maureen to move at the same time, but Maureen opted to stay in parish ministry. However, Maureen's health soon took a dramatic downturn after an experience she described, but could not explain, as like an electric shock going through her. She changed from the person I had known, and her suffering became unrelenting. Yet, her great devotion to Our Blessed Mother never flagged.

I picture her now embraced by the warmth of that peat fire in Boherbue and surrounded by her loving family and her many friends in heaven. And the wind will always be at her back!