

Sister M. Carmen (Davy), CSC

(Patricia Ann Davy)

September 8, 1923–July 6, 2021

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Frances B. O'Connor, CSC, and read by Sister Catherine Osimo, CSC, at Sister Carmen's funeral on July 15, 2021.

Even before entering the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Carmen knew that listening was the foundation of spirituality. She heard that she was called to serve the Lord. She wrote in her autobiography, "I had for a number of years wanted to become a religious Sister, but always 'qualified' this desire by stating that I wanted to be a missionary Sister."

After reading this, I could see more clearly the threads that wove our loving friendship all these 70-plus years as I, too, came to Holy Cross to be a missionary. I suspect the same could be said for all of us who responded to the call to the missions in those early years.

Capturing the essence of who Sister Carmen was is both easy and difficult, for she was a multifaceted personality, to be sure. Her loving greeting to everyone she encountered is a memory we all share. Her love of children impacted so many, beginning in 1944 with her six years teaching children in Fresno, California, at St. Alphonsus School, followed by five years at the Campus School here at Saint Mary's. Her many years at Holy Rosary Orphanage in Dacca, Bangladesh, exemplify best her commitment to the poor and their children. I cannot help but think of our dear Carmen except in the context of Psalm 34:

The Lord hears the cry of the poor.

Blessed be the Lord.

Let the lowly hear and be glad:

the Lord listens to their pleas;

and to hearts broken God is near,

who will hear the cry of the poor.

Sister Carmen administrated Holy Rosary Orphanage for 10 years until 1967 when she became the Apostolate Abroad coordinator for all our missions outside the United States. In 1973, along with Sisters M. Olivette (Whalen), CSC, and M. Gerald (Hartney), CSC, Carmen established a formation program for religious from Asia and Africa at Mater Ecclesiae Center in Tiberias, Israel. Later, the center became an international and inter-congregational place of spiritual renewal for professed sisters. During her 19 years at Mater Ecclesiae, until 1992, she served as an administrator and superior. Most importantly, she taught Scripture and was considered a wonderfully skilled teacher and mentor.

Carmen told many stories about the people she loved while serving in missions abroad but very few stories about herself. Carmen and I often shared the story of our departure trip to Bangladesh in 1953, accompanied by Mother M. Rose Elizabeth (Havican), CSC. Although the story is too long to share today, suffice it to say we were both very inexperienced travelers, quite young and full of anxious energy, and Mother Rose was very nervous to be making the journey as well. This was Mother Rose's first big trip abroad after World War II, so we sailed from New York to France, from there to Rome by train, and flew from Rome to India, and then took a propeller plane to Dacca. Let me just say that Carmen and I gave Mother Rose numerous opportunities to become stressed! If you are interested, I will be happy to tell you more about Carmen's part at another time.

The times were quite different when we were missionary sisters in Bangladesh. Back then, we returned home only after six years; there were no cell phones and letters were very slow to arrive. When we did get a package from home it was quite an occasion. One day a package came and it contained a chocolate bar for each of us. Well, if you knew Carmen, she could not have gotten anything better. We were all sitting around trying to decide whether to eat our candy or save it. Carmen quickly devoured hers. Sister Margaret Ann Shield, CSC got up to leave the room momentarily. Carmen, not realizing Margaret had not eaten

her chocolate bar, ate Margaret's. None of us, especially Margaret, ever forgot it! Carmen felt terrible but never lost her passion for chocolate.

I shared with you earlier that Holy Cross took great pride in Holy Rosary Orphanage. The government provided some support for 85 of the 120 orphans, and officials would occasionally do an audit of the books. Sister Carmen was responsible for maintaining the financial records and she had to borrow an adding machine from the superior, Sister Augustine Marie (White), CSC. It was still the time of the monetary units of rupees, annas and pice! The government expected to see receipts for all expenses. Local vendors in the markets did not always provide such receipts. Let us say that Sister Carmen found it challenging to maintain accounting best practices under such circumstances. Whatever she did, the government auditors always left satisfied. The Holy Childhood Association and donations from numerous friends and relatives of Holy Cross ensured that all the children received love and care.

Sister Carmen was truly a woman of joy. She loved to hear and tell stories that made her laugh. And she could laugh with all her heart until tears sprang from her eyes. Whatever humor I shared today is to be taken in this spirit. Her niece, Dianne Shuntich, wrote after this memento had been prepared. Dianne remembers their Aunt Pattie keeping the family children spellbound by her stories of mission experiences as well as the souvenir gifts she brought home to them. When they visited her in their adulthood, the extended family learned their family history from her and always found her a good sport and ready for any adventure, even if it meant hiking on the way. Dianne wrote, "She was always happy and gracious, with a great sense of fun and humor. Yet at the same time, she was dignified and devout. She just radiated God's love and was a perfect example to us of a true Christian." Dianne and the family are comforted to know that Aunt Pattie was not alone in her final days "but received great care and companionship from her beloved friends." Yes, she did. Let me conclude as I remember Carmen.

She was a woman steeped in love for Christ. Her entire being, everything she did and was, was directed to Christ and done in his name. God was near to her, and she loved to take time to immerse herself in prayer.

So, as we dwell in the delight of our own personal memories of our beloved Sister Carmen, we are each better for her legacy of listening, love and dedication she left us.

For all her nearly 98 years, she felt God's presence in her life. On this day, her prayer is that of the prophet: "Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple. The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear." (Isaiah 50:4-5)

Yes, our Sister Carmen Davy truly did hear the Cry of the Poor!

Rest in peace, my dear friend, for your labors are complete! Pray for us.