

Central Catholic High School

When the Superiors realized the condition of my dear mother, I was asked if it would not be a bit better for me to be in residence in Lawrence, Massachusetts. I was offered the position of Director of the community. Although I would have nothing to do with the school, I would take charge of the large community they had. There was an elderly Marist Father who was the chaplain of the whole community and two other Marist Fathers on the teaching staff who were also in charge of the campus ministry for the students.

Besides this overworked staff, there was another problem to be solved. A good number of the community was in living quarters on the top floor of the building above the gymnasium. This was very inconvenient for the Brothers who wanted to do quiet work or even retire early. The community had decided to find another residence and for me to take charge of relocating the Brothers into a better place, thereby freeing the rooms on the same floor as the top of the gymnasium. The separate residence would give the Brothers far more peace and quiet on days when the gymnasium was in service for games or for the weekly bingo. The new house for the Brothers was some distance away from school and assured privacy and quiet. The Brothers would no longer be bothered by the school weekly activities.

I had been asked a few times to give talks to the whole student body on our Marist missions, and that was continued and became just about my only contact with the students. Naturally I was happy to get to see Mother more often, and since I had been asking to go to the missions I began to see that this setup here might offer some real possibilities. I had been made to understand that as soon as the new quarters for the Brothers were available my chances for a mission job would be much better. I was thrilled! I had succeeded in closing our residence in Tyngsboro, and this new request seemed like a sure way to open for me the doors to a real mission. I had never questioned an assignment so far, and I was not about to do so now. I accepted this as the end of the rainbow, which would open new possibilities for me.

The Province of Esopus had accepted a foreign mission in Liberia, and they would accept volunteers from either Province. Another plus in this assignment was that I was close to my Mother who was slowing down visibly and I could be with her more often. It was a blessing to have the three Marist Fathers living with us, and my being so close to Worcester, and sooner or later when all these duties would end, I would possibly be free to spread my missionary wings! I had been put off often, and the words "eventually" seemed to be popping up more often in my interviews with the Provincial.

We slowly got rid of the surplus furniture that we had in the residence over the gym, and the Brothers enjoyed more privacy in their new residence. We were slowly getting installed and with this hardworking community just about anything could be planned and executed. Some of the Brothers who had been in our mission in Japan were living with us in Lawrence, and this kept the flame of my desire to go to a mission quite alive. We had had a great job to do and we thoroughly enjoyed doing it. I was quite grateful for an understanding and hardworking community. It was about this time that I was called upon by my mother to do her a very special favor.

Mother was ever so practical. She got straight to the point. She was happy in the nursing home and liked it, but with her condition getting progressively worse she had a plan and wanted me to implement it as soon as possible. It involved the various gifts and souvenirs that I had brought to her during my years as Assistant General. The Brothers all over the globe had given me all kinds of souvenirs for Mother, and she had her parlor filled with them and treasured each one tremendously. She called my two sisters and told them that anything that either of them wanted they should take because she was going to send back to me all of the precious souvenirs to be raffled at an auction at the school. The profits were to be given to the Marist missions. She had had much pleasure showing them off, and now she was being realistic and practical by disposing of them before the Lord called her. We tried to talk her out of this, but she was adamant and we followed her plans.

I well recall that the school van went to Worcester to get all those mission souvenirs, and the extra boxes also filled the trunk of a car as well. All these items were given over to the Mission Committee of the school, and they ran the auction. My sisters had taken the few items that they wanted, and all the rest were auctioned off for the profit of the Marist missions. Mother knew exactly what to do, and this had been a decision made by God,

for she passed away the following end of January. She was the strong woman of the Gospel and seemed to have a direct line to the Lord. I can never forget her. Any talent that I have ever had I got from her. The Lord had arranged all these transfers so that I could be with her and near her. She left me an example of confidence in the Lord that I could never forget. She had left me the greatest blessing ever: her example. She lived ready to die; yes, to die in the peace of the Lord she had served all her life. What an example. What a gift to leave us.

Mother died in January when the roads were bad. My community in Lawrence came the afternoon of the wake and said the Office of the dead for her, ending with the Salve, her favorite prayer.

They were going to return for the evening wake, but I told them not to do so because of the bad weather. They had just done what Mother would have enjoyed most. The Lord had slowly freed me of two important duties: my Mother was in Heaven, and my community was all set, ready to move into its new residence. My mother had opened for me the doors to the Marist mission of my dreams.

In all these assignments to Tyngsboro, Leeds Terrace, Chicago, and the Central Catholic community, I had been tremendously happy. So many of the Brothers I worked with and trained in Poughkeepsie were ready to take over from me. Eventually, I could be free to go off to the Marist mission of Pleebo in Liberia.