

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF SISTER BRENDA JUMBA

October 4, 1940–February 25, 2020



These two days have been a glorious celebration of Brenda's life and family traditions. Brenda Rose Jumba entered from Saint Barnabas Parish in Swissvale. In her letter of recommendation her pastor said, "I do not hesitate to recommend her wholeheartedly. She comes from a family of practical, cooperative and devout Catholics as witnessed by the frequent reception of the sacraments, and regular attendance at services. Brenda is the daughter of Mary and Steve Jumba; she was next to the oldest of four girls and one boy. All her siblings have been with us these two days.

Mary Ann the oldest, Stephanie, Angie, and Steve, the youngest and only boy. I taught Angie and Steve and Steve's wife Sharon at Saint Anselm High School.

When I think of Brenda, I think of family. I lived with Brenda at Saint Anselm back in the late 60s; she often invited me to her family home. Mary Ann, Richard, Susie, and Chrissy would often be their visiting their parents and grandmother as well as Stephanie and George on other occasions. So I got to know them at a very young age.

When it came time for Brenda to go to high school, she thought she would automatically go to St. Thomas because Mary Ann was attending there. Unfortunately, there was no room. So she ended up at Sacred Heart where she got to know the Sisters of Charity. In her oral history, she told of time when she was a sophomore. She went to Sister Helen Cecilia and said that she thought she wanted to be a sister. Sister Helen Cecilia said that's just the devil tempting you, forget about it. So she forgot about it until her senior year. She began thinking about it again. Sister Mary Zoe and Sister Perpetua both told her they thought she had a vocation. So she spent time after school helping in the art room or the work room

and talked with them about the Sisters of Charity. After graduation she went to meet Mother Claudia and as she said, the rest was history.

Brenda was very artistically talented. She minored in art at Seton Hill where she received her bachelor's degree in education. She earned a master's degree in education from Duquesne University. When I lived with Brenda at Saint Anselm's back in the late 60s, she always helped me with decorating my bulletin boards and border. Sister Judy talked about the program cover that she designed for her group's Golden Jubilee. I was very impressed when I saw that program cover. She created many arts and crafts, and made many decorations for the places where she lived. I have a lovely fall wreath she made for me which we've used on our door at Elizabeth House in Murrysville and at Ennis. Brenda was one of the winners at the Swissvale 75th Anniversary Arts and Crafts show sponsored by the Swissvale Women's Club.

Brenda's mother and father were in charge of the Slovak Dance group and Brenda helped her mother make the costumes for the dancers. Throughout her life Brenda has used her artistic talent for others.

Brenda taught elementary school, grades two through eight, for 28 years in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Phoenix, and the Archdiocese of Washington DC. She developed and coordinated a learning Center for Kindergarten through sixth grade.

Sister Brenda served as principal at Saint James, Apollo; Blessed Sacrament Cathedral School, Greensburg; Saint Theresa, Munhall; and Saint Alphonsus School, Wexford. She had been the first sister to serve as principal there in over 10 years, so they welcomed her with open arms.

After 44 years in education, Brenda developed a Program of Arts and Crafts for the residents of the Little Sisters of the Poor Home. She said, "I enjoy and love the residents. I love to see them build their self-esteem, to watch their faces light up as they complete their project." Brenda served as Coordinator of Arts and Crafts for eight years at the Little Sisters of the Poor and at Seton Center until her health brought her here to Caritas in 2012.

Probably in our mind's eye we can still see Brenda sitting at the table on the second floor atrium working on a puzzle; she always had a puzzle going. Sister Mary Agnes is completing the last one they started together.

As I said when I think of Brenda, I think of family . . . she was so proud of her nieces and nephews and grandnieces and nephews which you have seen here this evening. She bought them all gifts for every occasion and I know every year, she bought the family those little black, blue, and white books for Advent, Lent and Easter. And they are all as generous as she was. Many of those puzzles she worked on were bought for her by her family. Sisters Mary Agnes and Judy McKenna finished the puzzle they all started to work on together.

Yes they are very close knit family; none of her siblings moved out of state; they all remained pretty close to the Pittsburgh area.

They had a family get-together for almost every occasion. I would often be invited and would take Brenda to the party, usually hosted by Angie. They were all so welcoming! I felt like one of the family. The last big event I went to with all of them was for Brenda's 60th jubilee which they had at the Lamplighter. You could just see the love they all had for Sr. Brenda and for each other.

Those of us who knew Sister Brenda well, know how stubborn she could be, but as I said, she was also very kind and thoughtful and generous. Her family would give her gift cards to different restaurants and she would often share them with me. I was usually too full to eat dessert. Brenda may have only eaten half of her meal, but she always ordered dessert, which we know she shouldn't eat. So I usually ate half of it so she didn't get so much sugar in her.

I received a card from Brenda for every occasion; my last card from her was a Valentine card just a couple weeks ago. We were always there for each other; I remember one time in particular when I was feeling really down and I went to Brenda and she knew just the right words to say to me. I don't remember *what* she said but I remember how she made me feel.

When Sister Brenda was asked at the time of her Golden Jubilee, “What aspect of your religious life have you found most satisfying or rewarding, she said, “To plant seeds of faith and to nurture that faith in growth and love of God. Justice, integrity, and love play a very vital part in my life. Throughout my life, as a Sister of Charity, I have grown in wisdom, knowledge, and love of the Lord.”

So, now as we say goodbye to you Brenda, we know that God has seen all the **love and kindness** and **generosity** that you have shown to others and He is there welcoming you with open arms.

As Sister Susan said so beautifully, Brenda began her own Easter celebration. She laid aside all her painful and complex days of suffering to be welcomed into the light and peace of eternity. **Brenda, rest now in Easter joy!**

Funeral Liturgy Reflection

Sister Mary Lou Palas

February 29, 2020