

## Homily Honoring Sister Lucy...Bernadine....Bunny

February 6, 2016

Opening: Sister Barbara McMullen wrote the following in an email to share some of her experiences with Sister Lucy. In part Sister Barbara wrote Sister Lucy “being Provincial was a sign of hope for us and a willingness to move forward.”

Reflection: as a letter to Sister Lucy:

Dear Lucy,

My friend Gabriela told me that you were joining us at St. Joseph Center. She told me that you liked to dance and that you enjoy good liturgy. So I looked forward to meeting you because we had these likes in common.

After you arrived, I sat at your table and learned that your baptismal name was Bernadine. That’s interesting I thought..., is this name unique for someone born in 1922? Now I have learned that you truly brought unique gifts to the ladies of Providence in St. Louis.

I also learned that you shared a birth year, 1922, with your table companion, Mary Galik. Also, both of you were born on the special feast of Miriam, the mother of Yeshua: you, September 8, and she, the presentation of Yeshua and the purification of Miriam. In St. Louis, you had a special and enduring relationship with the Associates and now you were breaking bread, sharing meals with Mary, who has been an Associate here. Such is Providence.

I began to greet you and say, “I Love Lucy” remembering a very popular TV program.

Now I know better why that cute greeting was so much more than cute. Stories from Sisters who lived with you in St. Louis and admired you, show that love and affection. They also recognized your vibrant sense of humor like the Lucille of that television series.

Yes, as Sister [Mary] Francis reminded us in the Community letter, your name ‘Lucy’ evokes a connection to one of those great pioneering women who traveled from Germany to establish this community; her picture and the others hang in many homes of the Sisters. Quite frankly, I wish those ladies could have taken a lesson from you about smiling.

However, your religious name evolved from the Latin word ‘Lux’, ‘Lucis’...light. You certainly were the light for the women of the community in St. Louis. Whether you [were] traveling to Colorado to help deal with a complicated, messy situation or educating the Sisters about the encyclicals or leading them during a most tumultuous time in this country, in the Catholic Church, and naturally, among the women who had taken vows of consecrated life. Your witness continues as we can see on the back of this worship aid: there you are wearing a button opposing state sanctioned murder. Yes, this little lux of yours, like your religious name, you let it shine, let it shine all the time.

Lucy, you told me that you had another name: Bunny. On the face, this may seem childish to call such a mature, senior woman ‘bunny.’

However, I’m remembering another bunny, this time a rabbit; a Velveteen rabbit. Here is my adaptation from this familiar children’s story:

This provincial had lived longer in the community than many of the others. She was so old that her brown coat was bald in patches and showed the seams underneath. She was wise, for she had seen a long succession of mechanical individuals arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away; and she knew that they were only toys and would never turn into anything else. For Gospel magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those seekers of wonder and wisdom like this experienced provincial understand all about it.

“What is real?” asked the fresh young aspirant one day when they were kneeling side-by-side in the Chapel. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

The wise and seasoned crone answered, “Real isn’t how you are made. It’s a thing that happens to you. When someone loves you for a long long time, not just use you, but really loves you, then you become real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the young woman.

“Sometimes” said the gentle leader, for she was always truthful. “When you are real, you are willing to be hurt.”

The inquiring and enthusiastic youngster persisted: “Does it happen all at once, like being wound up, or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once” said the patient and mature senior, “you become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen to [those] who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, but the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints, and very shabby. But those things don’t matter at all because once you are real, you can’t be ugly, except to the people who don’t understand.”

I Eucharist, you Lucy, a light of wisdom for the women and men of Providence, and thank you again and again for lighting our way, especially during any frightening, uncertain times. May our Eucharist this morning celebrate in wonder and gratitude the dancing energy of Bernadine, Lucy, and yes, Bunny Schmidt.