

## Reflection/Eulogy for Sr. Lucy Schmidt, CDP

**“That the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.” (Daniel 12:3)**

Today we have a new star shining brightly in the heavens; appropo for Lucy, whose name means light. I believe it is the star of justice and it shines brightly.

Bernadine Schmidt, known by her nickname, Bunny, grew up in the small, rural, faith-filled community of Brussels, IL. I didn't know Bunny then but I imagine she was pretty much like other little girls of her time with wishes and hopes of what she might be when she grew up.

Most of us know her as Sr. Lucy, who as a young novice, was named after Sr. Lucy Weber, one of the first six pioneer Sisters who came to the United States from Germany to begin our congregation here. I imagine the first Sr. Lucy and our dear Sr. Lucy shared some of the same virtues...like a deep abiding trust in Providence, a faith that God called her to be risk-taking, courage to stand up for principles, and a strong belief in justice.

Sr. Lucy was a wise and visionary woman. Those of us, like me, who knew her in her more active years saw a woman who loved her family, was especially fond of her nephews and nieces, and their children, and had a deep commitment to the CDP community. Lucy was a life-long learner. Though she spent many years teaching children, she also was the Juniorate director for Sisters in temporary vows. Though I am sure we all have certain memories of her, I want to share with you today some reflections on the woman I knew.

Back in the 1970s Sr. Lucy began to hold sharing sessions for the temporary professed Sisters in a time when that was a pretty new and novel thing. She encouraged us to share our struggles and our hopes, and she shared hers with us as well. She taught us how important it is to always stay abreast of current world news events and church news in the modern world. The Vatican II documents used to sit right beside her bible in her office. She was an avid reader of all kinds of theology and spiritual reading books, periodicals like Review for Religious,

Weavings, and America magazine could be seen on her desk with bookmarks in various places in them. She advocated that we should become avid readers too.

When Sr. Lucy became the provincial in 1980 it was a time ripe for change in the province. For many people her election was a sign of Hope for the community and its future! She believed in ongoing education for the Sisters and began having programs for renewal for those over 60.

She asked the province over the course of a year to study the Catholic Social Teachings of the Church and come together monthly for discussions. She admired Bishop Ketteler and his legacy of justice and wanted us to be steeped in that social justice knowledge. But for Lucy it didn't end there.

Many of us know of her writing to our government legislators on the current social justice issues of our day. She made trips to Springfield, IL to the capitol, to protest the death penalty, to speak for better wages for workers, and wrote letters often in support of raising the minimum wage. She worked humbly many years at polishing her justice star.

She definitely was a life-long learner. In 1983 Lucy heard about a workshop on Alternative Ways of Membership and was adamant that we participate in it. So off we went to Chicago to learn what we could. Eventually what we learned there became our lay associate program and Lucy was both supportive and involved from the very early beginnings. She joined two other associates and myself to write our first Associate handbook. Until the last couple of years she was present at every Associate reception and renewal ceremony.

There was another side to Lucy as well. She enjoyed being with the Sisters, celebrating professions and jubilees and getting out on the dance floor for a polka or a waltz. Many of us enjoyed being her dance partner! She loved music and always was happy if we had as many musicians as possible playing our liturgies.

Eucharistic Liturgy was very important to her. That's one of the things she enjoyed about living at the Villa, where she could have daily Mass. It's what she missed most while at the nursing home in Granite City; and what prompted her to say that she wanted to be where there was an opportunity for daily mass. That

wish is what took her to Providence Heights in Pittsburgh where she did have daily Mass; where she had interaction with other Sisters in the skilled care unit; and where the caregivers there learned to know and love her, especially her smile. Pam, one of the nurses there, told me how she loved Lucy's smile and grateful heart—always thanking them for whatever they did for her.

Whether we were at a party or a meeting, you could always count on Lucy's smile to welcome you, to greet you, and she'd usually ask me, "what are you reading now, Barb?" In these last years Lucy told me she read more lighthearted novels because her short term memory wasn't so good, and so if she didn't remember, it really didn't matter all that much. She was never a big fan of TV except for Cardinal baseball games. There you would definitely find her rooting our team onto victory. She's one of the people who always said, "it's not over till the last out is made!!"

When I think of the Scriptures chosen for this morning's memorial liturgy I believe she leaves us with the message of being our own star...of continuing the legacy of justice that Bishop Ketteler and Mother Marie left us. The prophet Daniel captures Lucy well..."those who lead the many to justice will shine like the stars forever."

The responsorial tells us of her longing, "one thing I ask, this I seek, to dwell in the house of the Lord all my days." Now she is doing just that. And the Gospel of John, recounting the story of the wedding feast at Cana, and the one Lucy chose herself, shows her own willingness to "do whatever he tells you."

I spoke with her twice that last weekend of her life. Some of us were there in Pittsburgh for meetings. She still recognized the St. Louis Sisters and called us by name. I reminded her of all she did for us as CDPs and for some of us personally. I told her that Jesus was surely getting her mansion ready for her. I kissed her cheek, blessed her forehead with the sign of the cross, told her I loved her, and she said to me, weakly, "Thanks, love you too."

Those were the last words I heard...so typical of Lucy. Always grateful. She was so peaceful that Sunday evening...I believe she was ready to meet Jesus, to walk

to the Light, to be the new shining star of justice and love. I believe we can be sure that she remains in God's love, that she dwells in the house of the Lord, and that she's dancing with her life-long partner who is the Lord of the dance.

Barbara McMullen, CDP

March 12, 2016