



Sister Barbara Conroy
Entered eternal life on May 9, 2024

I want to begin by acknowledging and thanking the Sisters of Charity. You were my Aunt Barbara's family for the past 70+ years, and you nurtured her to achieve (which she did, despite Doctor/Spanish). The Community provided her with an unbreakable faith, education, mentorship, friendship, love, and, in the end, compassion. Your religious-based outreach through education, health care, and social services was the platform that enabled Barbara to become such an impactful person for good in the world.

But Barbara had 2 families.

She was loved by her parents Bartley and Mary Conroy. God-fearing parents who raised four children (Maryrose, Joe, Barbara, and Dick) in Newark and Irvington, NJ. Both parents worked - which was rare in those days - but their primary focus was on their faith/family...ensuring their children had opportunities they did not. They succeeded in that all four experienced full beautiful lives - with legacies that will be carried on through generations

But to be honest, none of her siblings had the lasting influence that my Aunt Barbara had. She had the intellect, decisiveness, organizational and leadership skills that would rival any Fortune 500 CEO. But hers was a mission based on compassion, dedicated to the Sisters of Charity making the world a better place - specifically for those in need.

On a more personal note, I am speaking for all of my cousins. There were ten of us. Barbara was a presence in our lives. It was no big deal; our Aunt was a Nun, and she was smart and successful. She was an integral part of both the Conroy and Grimm families. Present at every major family gathering in California, New Jersey, or any State in between. She was particularly interested in how all the 26 grandnieces and nephews were doing and reveled in every new addition to the family.

Some personal memories that I will always remember:

- The different habits early in her career (as SAM), waiting in "visiting rooms" at convents and running my finger along "fluted habit,"...which revolved into the infamous black and blue "helmets."
- But when visiting us at our home, she was just Aunt Barbara...relaxing with a glass of wine and maybe an occasional cigarette
- Getting her master's at ND, every Catholic's dream school at the time, and becoming a Fulbright Scholar to study in Spain.

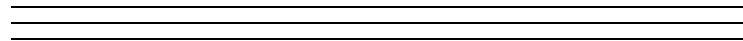
- Watching her move up the Organization hierarchy from teacher to Principal to Head of Provincial, Mother Superior, serving on NGO & Corporate Boards, it all seemed to come so naturally.
- As with all leaders, Barbara could be tough. Like her mother, she didn't suffer fools gladly and wasn't shy about making her opinions known (last days?)
- She even knew the Pope...urban legend on her receiving the Eucharist from Pope JPII in the 1990's...of "course, he knows" Aunt Barbara
- What she probably didn't know is how much her family (parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, friends) swelled with pride with all her accomplishments.
- Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations will never be the same as we have lost our "4th generation" Aunt, who was the touchstone of every annual picture.

In the end, Barbara went out on her own terms, in control and decisive as to her own care. My last memories will be of my aunt lying in bed with a litany of Sisters coming in to express their love for her and say goodbye. I will be forever grateful for that, especially for Sister Rosemary for the care, comfort, and love she gave to Barbara until her final breath.

Rest in peace, Sister Barbara Conroy. You were a giant in your community.... you made a difference in this world. You deserve all the bounties that are found in Heaven.

Mark Grimm

Nephew of Sister Barbara



During these last few years, as I left for work every day, Barbara would be at the front door calling out, "Remember! Smile and be happy. You are where you are supposed to be". Remember smile and be happy

Barbara's wonderful, committed life and legacy were both profound and simple.

It is not so much about what she accomplished, which was considerable, but how she did it. It is about how she thought, her calm, wisdom, and clarity of thought. Great gifts that she shared generously in her life.

I would suggest that Barbara be understood in the context of the Beatitudes as written in Matthew, which she leaned into throughout her life: blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. To understand Barbara is to understand these values.

Barbara's legacy was of generous love, staunch commitment, and ever-deepening wisdom that touched so many.

Barbara's Great Loves

- Barbara loved the Mission of Charity; the call to make God's love known in the world. She had an intentional desire to grow in the knowledge and love of God; recently telling one of our sisters "being home alone all day I have gotten to know God in a very different way".
- She dearly loved her vast extended family which began in Irvington, NJ (Father, a brick layer from Ireland, Mother a nurse from a farm in Ohio); she dearly loved her parents, sister Maryrose and brothers Joe and Dick and each and every one of you, your children, grandchildren and now great grands; though living far and wide you were always in her heart and consciousness.
- She loved being a Sister of Charity, servant leadership and ministries, and wonderful friendships. She loved the congregation and always said, "Trust the sisters" in the big decisions. She consistently made herself available to be involved; recently, I asked whether I should stay with her or go to Congregation Day. She said, "I would be brokenhearted if you did not go." Be with our sisters, and "we never know how much our sisters do quietly."

Her Stanch Commitment to the Mission

Barbara was staunchly committed to the ministries to which she was assigned, which were diverse and challenging. As society and religious life changed, she faced these realities with insight and courage

- She dug deeply into these assignments' learning, thinking through details thoroughly and always clearly.
- Initially, she wanted to be a doctor but was sent to study Spanish, and after her initial reticence, she fully embraced learning to speak and think in Spanish. She went on to be a Fulbright Scholar in Spain. Spanish language and literature opened new ministries and possibilities, working with new people and new frontiers. She was so proud of our sisters from Central and South America and Puerto Rico, Cuba, who taught her the language and culture well.
- She embraced ministry with enjoyment and great courage. Barbara highly valued education and teaching; in a sense, she was always a teacher in each of her works; as many of you may remember, her greatest compliment was, "She or he is the real teacher, you can tell."
- Barbara taught Spanish and was a secondary school principal for several years at St. Vincent's Academy and St. Joseph's High School, Paterson.
- Barbara served on the General Council, as the Western Provincial, and then as General Superior.
- She then transferred her skills to health care, helping to establish and lead the Family Health Center at St. Joseph Medical Center in Paterson. She also served as Mission Effectiveness leader there. She participated in the development of Trinitas Regional Medical Center (TRMC) in Elizabeth. She served as Board Chair for Trinitas Health and RMC and later was Director of Community Initiatives at Trinitas.

- As Board Chair, she guided St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic to safe birth with a new owner and provider; supported and facilitated the transition of Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern, NY, into the developing Bon Secours Charity Health System in New York State. She supported and led the evolving new, dynamic, and wonderful relationship with the Sisters of Bon Secours and the Bon Secours Health System from Marriottsville, Maryland. Access to health care and services for those most in need shaped and fueled her work.
- These activities, the colleagues with whom she collaborated in these ministries, and the evolved partnerships remained treasures to her.
- It was the depth of her thinking, clarity, calm attention to detail, and courage to make decisions that were so characteristic of Barbara.

And Then Her Person

I will share a few examples of the qualities and characteristics of her wisdom, humor, and openness to others that people have shared over these last few days, seeing her as a gift to them and so many others. I would say that she grew in wisdom, age, and grace until she died.

Some ways she affected people:

- She was most interested in others and those she met; not in being known
- A colleague from Plante Moran said, "Wonderful woman, her counsel will be missed, thoughtful and unflappable."
- Vastly intelligent and wise; open to new ideas, challenges, and changes
- She was always open to learning something new, particularly and most recently, the opportunity to help with the Congregation's sewer project with Sister Barbara Aires and the Sewer Crowd: preparing diligently each for the meeting. Her involvement meant a great deal to her.
- Barbara had a great sense of humor; when I kept trying to help her eat, she said, "Get in line, Rory, with the rest who are trying to get me to eat. Watching British TV, she would say, "What's a curry"; my Spanish has evolved from classic Spanish to words that people can understand like instead of cereal, I began to use "cornflakos". And when she was so sick initially and sliding to the floor where I was unable to keep her from falling and desperately said "Barbara you have to help me" she looked up with a little smile and said, "lighten up, Rory."
- Almost to the end, she cooked lots of chicken every night, and each day, she checked the internet for a different recipe.
- She found heroes in the Central and South American people's struggles for justice and basic human needs- Oscar Romero and the people of Bolivia, El Salvador, and Chile (Central and South America) held a special place in her heart.
- A nature lover, she spent many hours in the Great Swamp and at the Forsythe Nature Reserve in Brigantine, NJ.
- Her ministry continued to the last few months to the mailman (who knocked on the door on Saturday when finding out she had died... asking for a picture of her so that he could remember her – said, "She was always welcoming to me," the landscape workers, neighborhood dogs, and their family members.

- She directed her life to the end and, when pressured for more aggressive treatment, said, “I told you of my decisions. I clarified them with Dr. Ellen Early. Make sure that my decisions are carried out; if I need palliative care, then I will accept it...if I need hospice, the same.

Barbara was positive and focused, living fully as a Sister of Charity until she died; not heavy or labored but positive and hopeful.

And so, dear friends, as we remember our dear Barbara, let us live fully in what is asked of us. And always, always let us remember to Smile and be Happy.... Smile and be happy. Amen

Sister Rosemary Moynihan, SC