

Mary Paul Francis Bailey, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, Jan. 5, 2018

Sister Diane Forster, BVM

Some messages have come to us by phone and email. We've heard from two former BVMs: Kathleen Jackson and Rose Milani, who offer blessing and peace to Paul Francis in her final journey. We heard from a friend named Frankie Holod who said, "Paul Francis was a great mentor to me and almost like a second mother. She will be greatly missed." The next two stories echo what Sister Colleen McGinnity put on our community email that Paul Francis was a "welcomer." These two people certainly were welcomed in many ways by Paul Francis.

Teri DeSario (aka Mary Terese Clark), Friend *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

Sister Mary Paul Francis, PF to me and my family, walked into my life on the first day of my junior year at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa. She had taken over the economics department. I was one of the four economics majors in the Class of 1971. My first reaction, although not exactly fearless, was serious intimidation.

I had no idea that a wonderful gift had just blown into my life. She had a dry sense of humor. Her comments were often construed as sharp, but were just her wit and often were delivered with a twinkle in her eye and a quirky smile. At Clarke, we gave her nicknames that had to do with speed or determination. We said, "There goes PF Flyer." The name stuck; it fit her as fun, fast and bright just like the Radio Flyer wagon.

When the three local colleges started to work cooperatively, some men from Loras College came over to take one of her classes, thinking it would be a slam-dunk. She culled the herd quickly when she went over the syllabus and her expectations. I think about one-third of them dropped the course before the next class. PF's response was, and I paraphrase, "Guess they underestimated a Clarke education. It's not for the faint of heart."

She liked a good party and, according to her, most of you sisters do too. She shared pride in my family. You know, you can't brag about your children and grandchildren to many people, but she loved hearing about them. I could share everything with her. She was truly happy to be embraced as one of us. She wanted pictures and stories and we supplied her with many. Thank goodness for email! She has given us a few scares over the years, but she willed herself better, accepting what she couldn't change. She dealt with what life sent and carried on. But this time, it was time to go home. Paul Francis was a very special person in my life. I know I lived in her heart; she put me there. I know I will keep her forever in mine. She wasn't just my teacher; she became my mentor, a wonderful combination of best friend, sister and mother. With love from all the Clarks and DeSarios.

Margaret Wallyn, Friend *(Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM)*

I met Paul Francis at Mundelein College in Chicago in 1977. I signed up for her economics class. On the first day, I walked Sister Paul Francis with a quick, determined step, teaching materials in hand, a solid plan for the class. She commanded the class the moment she walked in the room. Her presentations were a delight. She was well researched, spoke clearly and with conviction. She looked around the room to make sure the class understood. She patiently answered questions and explained things thoroughly.

I ended up majoring in economics, finance and management and she was my guidance counselor. As I was growing into an independent woman, she was there propping me up, giving me confidence, and looking out for me. We developed a friendship that only got stronger over these years. Each time we got together, the space of time between visits seemed to vanish. She spoke so often of her family members and showed me the current pictures.

She became my adviser in life over the years. We talked about everything—family, friends, my marriage, and later my divorce. She provided such insightful and reassuring advice when I needed it and always brought the love of God into our discussions. She was an amazing woman in every way and I will miss her. Her kindness, love and compassion will be irreplaceable in my life. I won't say "Good-bye," but instead, "Until we meet again."

Sister Sue Rink, BVM

I had the good fortune of living and working with Paul Francis at both Clarke University and Mundelein College. I could say many things about her, but the one thing that was very evident was that she was a favorite of the adult students at Mundelein. The people at the weekend college, particularly the men, loved her classes and her jokes. I know that she will be missed at both places.

Tina Miranda, Grandniece

As I was listening to the stories from her former students, it reminded me that the experiences and the role she played in my life clearly wasn't unique. A lot of the words that were said would be how I would describe her. I could tell her anything, absolutely anything. I loved coming here to visit her because it was a respite for me, a respite for my soul to see her. I'm a single mom who works fulltime. We always had such a great time together. I could tell her absolutely anything without fear of judgment. We talked and had many shenanigans together.

One of the things I loved most about coming up here was that she would lay these little nuggets down. She would tell me, "The sisters and I went to Panera. I just love having this at Panera." So I would put that in the back of my mind. When her birthday or some special day came up, I could call Panera. One time I ordered a roll that she liked. I talked to the manager and explained that I was from Minnesota and the order was for my auntie. He offered to drive the order to Mount Carmel. She would always say, "Oh, you little stinker."

It was a game I played with her. So any time she mentioned something, it was a little gem. I know she had a favorite Italian place in Chicago, Lou Malnati's. I saw them on the Food Network and contacted them. I said, "My great-aunt is a nun who grew up in Chicago and loves your food." Well, they shipped their sauce to her. Some of the sisters put together a nice Italian meal for her. I loved doing that stuff for her because I wanted her to know that she was loved in my heart as much as I knew that I was loved in her heart.

Sister Carol Marie Baum, BVM

Paulie is how I know Paul Francis. We go back a few years to when she moved to Mount Carmel and we started playing bridge together. Intimidate is probably a good word. It's said with the best of intentions, however, because she was a really tough bridge player and not willing to take second, third or fourth place in the scoring. We had some wonderful games together with Sisters Gertrude Ann Sullivan and Madalyn Hogan either on a Sunday afternoon after lunch or sometimes after supper.

It seems very appropriate that we are here with the lights, flowers and beauty of Christmas, knowing that we are sending Paulie home to an absolutely grand celebration of life. She was a party girl; I don't think this is anything new to those who knew her. She loved a good time. She knew how to play a good part in the planning and execution of a party. One of the fondest memories I have is our St. Paddy's Day celebration, which for an Irish community with mixed members in terms of nationality, we always had a great time. Paulie, a couple of times, came as the Irish leprechaun. Thanks, Paulie, for teaching us how to have a good time.

Sister Marie Corr, BVM

I met Paul Francis by a very unusual route. She had a ministry of letter writing for less able BVMs. I wrote throughout my life to my first and second grade BVM teacher, SM Charlotte Ann Esch. When Paul Francis began her ministry, I received mail about Charlotte. It was a fun acquaintance, but I thought, *Who is this woman?* Then I came here and met her in the real. I so cherished her feistiness.

Bob Bailey, Nephew

There are nine kids in our family. When Paul Francis and my grandparents would come to visit, the boys would have to take their places in the basement and the adults would get the bedrooms upstairs. This is one way she would wake me. As I would be lying there sound asleep, she would pull one hair out of my head and tickle my nose until I woke up. She would be sitting there just smiling away.

Shirley Brown, Development Office, BVM Center

I work for the Sisters of Charity in the Development Office. I started here about eight years ago. Sister Paul Francis came down to our office one time during Halloween, which I love and she knew that I loved it. She came dressed as Raggedy Ann. She had the red hair, the little dress and a big, giant lollipop. I said, "Oh, Paul Francis, I have a picture of you from the Clarke days that you are going to love. I am going to find it and bring it."

I went home that night, scoured my picture boxes in the attic until I found it, and brought it in to her. It was a picture of her office girls when she worked in the Student Accounts Office. They were all dressed as 1950s bobby sockers. Paul Francis came in wearing a black leather coat, a headband tied around her head, scars on her face, tattoos on her hands and she even carried a little plastic motorcycle that she pulled behind her on a string. I think she won the prize that year for best costume.

Sister Catherine Dominick

Paul Francis was the most generous person. If you asked her to do something, it was done that day, immediately, if not sooner. You gave it to her and it was done correctly and done beautifully. She did so much for me. She did all my Christmas cards and labels. She read to us on Saturday. I will miss Paul Francis an awful, awful lot. Thank you, Paul, for everything.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I work here in support services and handle all kinds of personal needs for sisters. I have a vague memory of Paul Francis at Clarke when I was a student. There's nothing much. However, coming back to Mount Carmel seems to have generated many interesting, residual memories. One day she came to me with a pair of earrings with ND (Notre Dame) on them. They were obviously a treasured possession, but one of the posts had broken. She wanted me to see if I could find out how to get it repaired. For some months, we were not very successful. She would shake her head and take them back. A little while later, she came back and told me that she had gone to this jeweler and they had agreed to give repairing the

earing a try. Sure enough, she had her wonderful Notre Dame earrings back. She just smiled at me almost saying, "See, I knew it could be done."

As I clean out sisters' rooms and possessions, sometimes I come across interesting things. One of them was a small, hanging pillow with the Notre Dame symbol on it. One day I just hung it on her door. Later on, she came into my office smartly, sat down and said, "Well, was that from you?" I told her I was just passing on something because I knew it meant a great deal to her.

She was moving back and forth in the last months between her room in the Motherhouse and rooms in Marian Hall. Let's just say she was anxious to return to her Motherhouse room. I would help bring things over and back. If it wasn't something she had with her, she would say it was here or here or here and would become so frustrated when I would look everywhere according to her directions and beyond and still couldn't find it. I think she thought I was a little incompetent. Just last week, we had a fun exchange and I will always remember her little twinkle in her eye. I am delighted to see her in her jubilee outfit. She had told me, "That's what I want for my funeral." It just seems so right and I love the pictures we have of her from that day last September.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

Until about five years ago, my sense of Paul Francis was one of intimidation, fear, avoidance and everything else like that. I had to come back from Ghana, because I had vertigo. I was walking down the hallway toward the Motherhouse library. I must have been swaying from one side of the hallway to the other. Paul Francis was behind me and she asked, "Are you dizzy?" "Yes," I replied. So she got in front of me and said, "Put your hands on my shoulders." I had never touched Paul Francis in my life, but I did. She gently led me to the library and sat me down in a chair. I believe she got a nurse to check on me. That was the kindest thing that Paul Francis could have done for me. In the course of the last five years, I have come to know her as a very loving person. I appreciate your kindness, Paul Francis. I will continue to put my hands on your shoulders so you can lead me to a balanced life.

Sister Lou Anglin, BVM

Paul Francis' sense of responsibility, service and kindness was extended to the Loggia community, to Anne Marie McKenna, Lynn Lester, Paulette Skiba and myself, as our prayer partner, a relationship that Paul Francis took very seriously. We kept her busy in that regard. She took it seriously, but it also helped us to get to know her in a different way. It brought forward her tender, loving relationship she has with God and that she extended to us. We are all grateful to her and for her and her prayers. We will continue to count on them.

Sister Kathryn Lawlor, BVM

Paul Francis is going to be very much missed in the Pioneer Sisters class. She went to school at St. Vincent in Chicago and she loved St. Vincent. Not only did she love the school, but every sister who taught her. She remembered them and, when we mentioned a sister's name, she could tell us all kinds of stories. She was very fond of the sisters. In one of the stories, one of their teachers in eighth grade was changed to another school in Chicago. The entire class went to visit that sister at the school to which she was changed because they were so fond of her. We are going to miss your stories, Paul Francis. Now some of them we didn't need to hear, but we appreciate your great love and concern for the sisters who taught you in grade school.

Justice Clark, Aide

I met Paul Francis this year. When I first met her, I was so intimidated. I've never been so scared. Later on, as we talked more, she was so welcoming. When I think of spunk, I think of Paul Francis. It's the first thing that comes to my mind. She was so dear. She really made me feel at home here. We bonded the last couple of months. We both love traveling and she told me about going to South America and volunteering. She had so much life in her. It was great. She always talked about her teaching. Even after she was here and finished with the colleges, she still wanted to teach. She actually taught me how to crochet in the last couple of months. She was pretty awesome.

Deborah Bailey Miranda, Niece

People talk about intimidation, but Paul Francis had a set of perfectionism that she really brought to us nine children when she would come for her yearly visit. We were expected to pick up on that perfectionism. She really influenced every one of us toward that set whether it would be handwriting, schooling, or household chores. She wanted us to do to the best of our ability. Sometimes I would write her a letter and she would send it back to me corrected. So, if you think she intimidated you! She could really make you laugh, couldn't she? My father, her brother, was just her love. She adored my dad. My dad would cook these fantastic meals when she came to visit; he would really show off his culinary skills. Of course, we would all find a way to get invited to that meal.

Sister was fantastic. We all loved her and adored her. Boy, those clothes she wore! The black habit! We were just fascinated by it. She spent more time trying to get us to let go of her. We all wanted to touch her and stroke that beautiful uniform. She made every single one of us feel as if we were the only one in the family. She could single you out and make you feel really special. There were so many of us; I don't know how she managed to do that. We are going to really miss her. We are going to miss her stories. Her influence in our lives will continue. I feel her influence in my life has continued on to my children and grandchildren. I am very grateful to her for her influence.

Sister Alice Caulfield, BVM

Paul Francis and I go way back, around 50 years. We used to call it a love-hate relationship. We've heard the words feisty and intimidating. You can imagine what we went through. In spite of what we say, we all know her bark was worse than her bite. You have to love that. I have two stories.

First, one male student from the University of Dubuque who was in her Clarke class became a longtime friend. He's sorry that he can't be here today. He called her regularly, almost every week. He became a donor for the BVMs. He had never met a BVM before, maybe not even a nun. He told me the other night that when he went to that class, he walked in and saw this short little person and thought, *This is going to be a breeze*. In very short order, he found out it was not going to be a breeze. "You will do it and you will do it well. That's the way it is or you are not here." He always loved her for that because she was the best teacher he had ever had in his entire career. He attributes his job at Merrill Lynch to what she taught him in economics.

The other story, I have been through a lot of good times and bad times with Paul Francis over the years. I had a wonderful visit with her last Saturday, the best visit I've ever had. Well, maybe not a visit. She was in a different space. She was extremely at peace. I have never known her whole body language at peace. She made a decision, and she wanted me to affirm it, that she was going to stay at Marian Hall. That was a big decision for her. Of course, I affirmed it wholeheartedly. Her intention was to let nursing know it on Tuesday. Everything about her was very, very different. Peacefulness is the only word I can

use. I am so happy for her that she could be at such total peace. But she would not lose her feistiness ever!

Sister Mary Janine Wolff, BVM

I lived with Paul Francis in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where we had one convent but three different schools. The convent was at St. Patrick and I taught there. The other two schools were St. Jude GS and LaSalle HS. The sisters at those two schools had to go out every day, so I didn't get to know her in a school situation. I only learned when we both came here, that she was not teaching high school but sixth grade at St. Jude. But I was intimidated by her. I thought she was a high school teacher who would look at me, the first grade teacher. When I saw her here and looked in her eyes, I said, "You don't intimidate me anymore. I know you."

Tina Miranda, Grandniece

I have one last story to share. We were down here for her 70th Jubilee, which was an amazing time. All the sisters put on a fabulous event that will be forever remembered. One of her students, Gigi, came down. I found out that Gigi and I alternated our visits, coming down three or four times a year. We were having a conversation about how much Auntie loved to go out for dinner, which was always something we would try to do. She said, "You know she loves Timmerman's Supper Club." I took that gem and put it in my pocket.

When I got home, we exchanged emails and I told her, "You know, Auntie, we'll be down at Thanksgiving to see you." I surprised her by making reservations at Timmerman's for her, my mom and me. I remember that she didn't respond for a couple of days. Honestly, my feelings got hurt. I really wanted to make this a special experience for her, knowing how she liked to go out and do things. She fired back an email at me saying, "For someone who works so hard for her money, why are you wasting it going to a supper club when we have perfectly fine food at the convent?" We had a great dinner at Timmerman's by the way. Did she tell everybody that? Have you ever met a person who could take you to task, but with love? She is the only person I have ever met who could and you just felt loved. That was our last memory together.