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Home and Away

Bob Colburn

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Mary McCarthy RIP

She made us all feel special

Bob Colburn CSSp

There is a time to be born and a time to die — “God has made everything beautiful in its time.” Yes, even death — as in Mary’s case when it follows 90 years after birth!

Mary’s leaving us, though sad, had a great beauty to it — her 90th birthday just a week earlier, her short stay in hospital, the love and prayers of family and friends, and the presence of God that surrounded her as she left us.

Mary was truly part of a wonderful family, Jack, Angela, the “boys” (her grandsons, no longer boys), their wives and now her great-grandchildren. Mary always spoke with such

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love and admiration for each of them, as she did of her nieces and nephews and her special friends. I thank you so much for sharing her with us.

Yes — Mary was also part of our Spiritan family. Mary was often sister, mother, counselor and even confessor to many of us. Mary continued to be part of our family long after the 42 years that she worked for us. Maybe she didn’t mind us so much — she stayed on until she was 78!

I am positive that there were times when Mary wanted to kill us! Yet she cared for us when we were sick. She saw many Spiritans through their deaths. She mourned with us and laughed with us in that wonderful way of hers.

Mary even danced with us ... in her apron with a dust rag in one hand. Once we had teased her a bit and turned her round the living room floor she’d laugh and say “Now get on with you” in her beautiful Irish accent.

She found time to sew for us, to make peace amongst us and, so important, she kept our confidences and our secrets. We always joked that we would have to pay her NOT to publish her “tell all” book. Mary knew us so well and loved us in spite of our foibles. She was just the same with her family and her friends. As one of her friends said, “Whenever and wherever you met Mary she simply brightened your day.”



Paul invited Timothy to finish the race, to keep the faith and expect God’s reward. Mary did all of that. She celebrated God in each of us and in all things. Whether she was making a bed, donating from what little she had to support Spiritan missionaries in Papua New Guinea, doing laundry, praying in the chapel, traveling in her retirement; she made the very best of life.

That life was never easy: a young widow, leaving Ireland to raise Jack in this foreign land: starting out to support her little family by cleaning for the Notre Dame Sisters; then being stolen away by Father Troy: “You’re Irish, you don’t belong here; come with me.” And then staying on for 42 years!

From visiting Superior Generals, to cardinals and bishops, returning VICS volunteers, one Spiritan newcomer after another — Mary made us all feel special and very loved.

Today’s gospel promises that there is a special place prepared for us when this life as we know it comes to an end. I pray that Mary’s room is an absolute delight — but don’t worry if it isn’t, Mary will have it prepared in no time.

Rest in peace, my dear friend. ■

Edited from the homily at Mary McCarthy’s funeral.