

Sr. Regina Marie Bruner, OP

A Reflection by Sr. Rosemary Rule, OP

Today, on her birthday, we bring our Sister Regina Marie to her final resting place. The Paschal Candle burns with the fire of promise. Regina is celebrating her jubilee, the fulfillment of her baptismal call to holiness, in the place of her deepest longing. And so, this year, her wish made when she blew out her birthday candles all those times has come true.

Jesus tells us, "Have faith in God and faith in me. I am going to prepare a place for you and I will come back to take you with me."

I would be willing to bet that none of us has ever known a person who spoke so often and so fully of heaven as Regina Marie did. Heaven was her favorite topic. She lived deeply the faith that John's Gospel and First Corinthians speak of. She knew with all her heart and soul that heaven would be the most wonderful place imaginable and that the vision promised would surely be beatific.

She used to say "IMAGINE!" and then lead into a glowing description of what it would be like to be with Jesus...to SEE the One who loved us so much. "Think of it!", she would say. We would be with Mary. God's love will enclose us and never would we need another thing.

Regina was so excited to have such a future. So strong was her conviction that even when she was faced with the loss of someone she loved dearly, she was more excited about their being in heaven than she was devastated by their death.

After her friend Clare Marie died, it seemed that her contemplation of heaven expanded even more. Think of it! She used to say. Just imagine! Clare Marie is with GOD! How can I be sad when she has that! For the 13 plus years that Regina lived without Clare Marie on this earth, she never wavered in her happiness for her friend. Regina's greatest desire was to join with all her loved ones in the eternal joy of heaven. She just couldn't get there fast enough. But did that mean that she didn't love it here, and us here? No, for Regina it was all part of the life flow toward the final goal. The reading from Corinthians tells us all about that. Our mortal bodies will become immortal...our lives will be fulfilled...Scripture has promised us: this shining eternal wholeness. Life wasn't going to end; it was being transformed into unimaginable joy.

How did one prepare for this happiness that would never end? A hearty laugh, a dish of ice cream, a good book, quiet time in the chapel - these were preparations for happiness that never ends.

The pain, which Regina Marie had so much of in her lifetime here, the unanswered questions, the slow diminishment, all these were preparations for the time when no pain can touch us, no disappointment can last....only joy eternal. God has promised this and so it will be done. So that famous answer to the question: *Regina, how are you?* was not an untruth, it was a promise of things to come. "Hunky dory" was her answer because that was how her spirit was. "Hunky dory" was her gift to us. Julian of Norwich was more formal: "All shall be well." Regina made us believe that same thing in a more folksy way. The message is the same. The conviction that here and hereafter are crocheted into one piece ... the sufferings, the friendships, the chocolate shakes and the pain medicine, the hugs and kisses, the surgeries... they are all a part of the whole.

Gratitude was a shining virtue in our Regina. She thanked us often. She prayed for us and told us so. How many times did she say: "I pray for you every day, by name." How many ways did she find in her later years to minister to the staff, the sisters, her loved ones, through her warmth, through her smile, through her short typed notes, through her interest in our stories.

And now she is in Glory and we don't have to ask how she is – we know that she is well and truly "Hunky dory" and is praying for us till we are with her again.

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Sr. Rosemary Rule