

G-23612
R. Metzger
Religious of Jesus and Mary
SISTER LORRAINE RICHARD, R.J.M.

1932-1978

"The word of the Lord has echoed forth from you resoundingly." I Thess. 1:8

Lorraine, you are with the risen Lord in glory now! Even though we rejoice in that assurance, we still miss you very much on earth, so you must forgive us if we reminisce a little, for our own consolation. We'll take our cue from Bishop Metzger, who mentioned at your funeral, that even if you wouldn't want all "these things" said about you, you couldn't talk back!... Moreover, he added, "if you decide to speak to the Lord about it, He'll say it's quite all right."

When you were born that October 28, 1932, in Oakland Beach, R.I., and baptized three days later in St. Rita's Church, only God knew how much His word would come to echo resoundingly in your life. Before we recall our own memories of how we became aware of this progressive reality, we'll let your eldest sister, Roma, tell us a few things about your life as a member of the Richard family.

"Lorraine was the sixth child and the baby of the family. From the outset, she was a happy, gifted child. She was inclined toward 'performing,' and was allowed to take dancing and singing lessons at the early ages of four and five years. She became a favorite on the weekly Saturday morning children's program, on a Providence radio station. Her impish manner and natural talents contributed to her ease and delightful rapport with all audiences.

Her popularity, and all the adulation she was receiving, were changing this sweet child into a self-conscious little 'conniver' who could turn on charm and tantrums at will. I vividly remember how our parents deliberated carefully, and finally made the decision that all the adulation wasn't healthy, spiritually and emotionally, for their little one, and so the dancing and singing lessons were stopped. Little Miss Shirley Temple's career was nipped in the bud!

When I met my husband-to-be, Lorraine was just thrilled by the romantic aspects of the situation. The fact that he was attentive and pleasant made it easier for her to approve him as my future mate. She would sit by his side, trying to make adult conversation, like 'Doctor, what is your favorite toothpaste?' She was naively sincere, and ready to use anything her favorite dentist would recommend. When he left for active duty in the Pacific, Lorraine shared with me all the aches and pains and worries caused by a serviceman in the Second World War.

Lorraine was always loving and obedient toward our Mother, but Dad's girl she definitely was. She would sit, as a child, on the arm of his chair, and just naturally share everything with him. She would succeed in obtaining many favors which none of us would have dared request.

One aspect of Lorraine's childhood which had an important influence upon her life, and possibly directed her toward religious life, was our Mother's willingness to serve the Lord in so many ways. One of these required her to prepare meals for our two priests, as they could find no housekeeper to care for them. Our pastor, Father Marren, was a humble, humorous, brilliant and loving man of God, who just enjoyed chatting with Lorraine while Mother would serve the delicious meals. Lorraine was so alert and so

open to all of Father's ideas and information. Her knowledge of the Bible and history was amazing, due to her daily conversations with this attentive priest, who must have detected a special talent and discerned that it must be directed toward the Lord's service.

Each time she came to Maine, everyone who met her marvelled at her beautiful simplicity and joyous spirit. Her last memorable week with us was two summers ago: her first trip to Maine since her entrance into religious life, and such a precious experience for us. She delighted in everything we did to entertain her, and related to our moderate, rather quiet life-style. She loved everything and everybody.

Our most precious memory has to be our prayer time with her. Her very special choice of words and her lovely voice lifted our souls to a high spiritual level, and filled our hearts with so much joy and love for God. How she cried, and so did we, during our last prayer session. We probably had a premonition that this was to be our last opportunity to praise the Lord together. I kept thinking how beautiful she was, and how I hated to see her leave. We parted with happy plans for her 1978 Jubilee celebration... Our Heavenly Father had other plans."

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It is as a Religious of Jesus and Mary that we ourselves knew you best, Lorraine. When, as Mother Mary of the Presentation, you made profession February 23, 1953, and renewed your vows with the word "forever" exactly five years later, it was easy to discern the loving generosity that was so very much a part of you.

Teaching became your first wide-open field for sowing the seed of God's love. Grammar, composition, appreciation of literature, public speaking, debate, basket-ball, counseling, missionary activities -- the litany could go on and on -- were means through which you gained access into the hearts of young girls, at St. Charles, St. Clare's, Regina and Jesus-Mary Academy. Your after-school and weekend hours were never counted. Only you know how you could ever manage moderating even the moderators of the Catholic Students Mission Crusade, directing forensic and oratorical programs, preparing assemblies, coaching basketball, decorating classrooms, offering individual guidance, and responding to any of the thousand needs that came to your attention.

It is not surprising that your myriad talents were invited to focus on administration, as sub-Directress of Stella Viae in Rome, as Assistant Principal at Regina, as Principal of St. Clare High School in Woonsocket, and the Academy in El Paso.

As the Lord forged His way more and more profoundly into your being, you discerned retreat work as the way through which you could best reveal the love and the goodness of the Father. At Holy Cross Retreat House in Mesilla Park, New Mexico, you became both programmer and director of retreats -- besides, of course, being Vice-President of the Sisters' Council in El Paso, and liaison person between the Diocese of El Paso and the Catholic Charismatic Movement in that city. In testimony of this last ministry, the Advisory Board has written of you, "She went about this work with a true shepherd's heart. No one can take her place. Please join us in prayer that...provisions made for guiding the Pentecostal Movement in our Diocese will be of the kind that would have been her desire, completely under the direction of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with God's will."

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Lorraine, it is impossible to say all the good things we discover in our hearts as we remember you. It is even too difficult to make choices, for the options are so numerous. However, we have, and shall keep the two best sources of knowledge to which we can refer in the days ahead: First, our own precious experience of having lived with you, talked with you, served with you, prayed and shared deeply with you. Second, your own honest, simple, humble and very beautiful testimony given in presence of the Open Arms Community Prayer Group in El Paso. In it you not only summarized the exterior events of your life, but you revealed your fears, your tenderness, your struggles, your strengths and weaknesses, and above all, the constant workings of the Lord in the depths of your being, and your spiritual journey under His loving guidance. Suffice it just now to recall one passage from the simple, eloquent witness you gave that night:

"My prayer is now more Scriptural. I am letting Him instruct me, reveal Himself, not for the sake of knowledge, but of the Lord. I am deeply drawn to the idea of reconciliation, of letting the Lord open our souls, to know who we are in mercy."

The Lord called you Home much sooner than we had ever imagined, Lorraine. Did you chuckle from Heaven when you saw and heard the stunned expressions at the news of your death? What did you think of the crowds in and out of St. Patrick's Cathedral the eve of your funeral, and the packed church as Bishop Sydney Metzger became the main Celebrant for your Mass of the Resurrection? Surely you heard him speak of you, after the Liturgy, as a personal friend, one who had the true spirit of prayer and communicated it to others. "It is for that reason," he said, "that I gave her the appointment to be the liaison between the Bishop of the Diocese and the Charismatic Renewal Movement."

Nor can you be unaware of the tributes that have poured in since March 3, 1978, all to the effect, as some Regina alumnae put it, that you, "more than anyone, had brought the Lord into their lives." Or again, to say it in the words of your C.S.M.C. co-worker, Msgr. Christopher, when he celebrated a Memorial Mass for you at Regina: "Mother Mary of the Presentation was full of the idea of what the Church is all about... Just a tremendous woman, willing to give beyond her physical capacity... For our programs, she had ideas from right to left and center field! She did so very much for this Archdiocese."

You can see now, Lorraine, why we chose the Scriptural quote introducing these memories. It is so very a propos, for certainly "the word of the Lord has echoed forth from you resoundingly!"

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N.B. The tape of Lorraine's "testimony" mentioned above, may be obtained from Sister Jane Prevost.

Provincial Council of Texas and New Mexico
