

REMEMBERING SISTER CECILE LEBEAU, CSC



If we wish to remember the life of someone, it is good to start at the beginning, and Cecile had a memorable beginning. She was born a little over a hundred years ago in New Bedford, MA. There was something of a drama surrounding her arrival. She was so tiny and fragile that the doctor told her mother that she probably wouldn't live beyond the next 24 hours. But the Living God dwelling in this tiny baby girl chose life for her, and ... the rest is her story.

Cecile was an intelligent child. At school she was at the head of the class so often that one of her teachers noticed that several of the other bright students were increasingly feeling discouraged. Cecile was always the only one getting the "First Star". She explained this to Cecile and hoped she would accept if for a time, the Star could be given to a student who had made the greatest effort. Cecile, in all her goodness, readily accepted. Kindness to others came naturally to her; it always would.

On entering Holy Cross, years later, that same kindness continued to be a hallmark of her relationships with others, be they her religious sisters, her students, parents and anyone she met along her way. She was a good teacher and loved the young people in her care. When any of them needed extra help, she made herself available, and if timing for them was difficult, she would adapt her schedule to theirs. There was one "star" student, she would particularly be proud of later, a young girl named Denise Turcotte. She taught at just about every level from grade two to High School. My own experience with Cecile was at St. Dom's High School in Lewiston Maine. She taught French and enjoyed the French Canadian atmosphere of the city and its culture. We lived there in an inter-community setting and Cecile was just at home with, and as loved by, the 3 or 4 religious communities with whom we shared our lives.

Sr. Cecile's last mission was in St. Albans, VT. It was here she lived and worked for years and where she gathered so many special memories. She worked for a time in the schools, teaching at the high school level. With time, she ministered at the parish with a team and the Pastor, Fr. Roy. Cecile and Fr. Roy established a good relationship, appreciated and really worked well together. She enjoyed her ministry, visiting families, counseling couples, discovering the needs of children and mostly she listened well to everyone. Fr. Roy understood this and once commented that Sr. Cecile heard more confessions than he did. A specific ministry that she especially enjoyed was working with the RCIA team preparing persons interested in embracing the Catholic Faith. Just about everyone in the parish knew her and it was said that if you planned on walking back from Mass with her on a Sunday morning, it would be a long walk; all along the way, persons would stop her and begin talking...one after another. Arriving home could take a while!

Finally when age and health brought her home, here at the Manor, and to HCHC, she did so as she accepted all the other assignments... She had received from life all she needed and wanted, for as she so often repeated, all she wanted was "what God wants". Apparently she did so well "what God wanted", He just left her here for a long, long time to continue. And now, it was time for Him to bring her home to himself and as she realized this is what her Beloved wanted, once more, she went along with what he wanted. Very simply, she left for Home peacefully, and gracefully doing what He wanted, one last time.

Sr Diane Villeneuve, CSC