

Words of Remembrance for S. Christopher Weber

November 25, 2013
Wisdom, 6:12-16, 22
John 21:15-19

“Wisdom is found by those who seek her.”

On July 11, 1950, Sister Christopher Weber, along with 19 other young women, made her monastic profession and promised to follow the way of Benedict until death. Sister Christopher has completed that life. I believe she is in heaven.

S. Christopher spent much of her entire monastic life at St. Anselm's, New Hampshire – 37 years to be more accurate. Before leaving for the east, Sister spent time at Richmond grade school, ended up by becoming principal. Some of our Richmond Sisters remember her as their principal. She then moved on to Cathedral High School and taught English before going to St. Benedict's High School, again as principal. During this time she also got her first masters' degree at the University of Iowa. Sister Baulu Kuan was her roommate at that time and said the word that would best describe Christopher was “brilliant.” Her professors and fellow students agreed.

S. Christopher did not want to go to St. Anselm's but she obeyed. Before she left she wrote a poem to me, and I include it here because I believe it shows another side of this brilliant woman. Her nephew, Bob Walter, who sat with me at her bedside one afternoon, said he would describe her as melancholy. Listen to her own words:

Hospitality

Despair has come to live with me;
He's such a quiet guest
No one could know he holds my life
In silence without rest.

Before he came the laughter
That echoed from your eyes
Gave company to lonely hours
That now I must despise.

Politeness makes me wary
Of seeming over-rude.
How does one say a nice good-bye
To a hopeless interlude?

Once she moved out east, she went back to school to get a second masters' degree from the University of Maine in guidance and counseling. It was here that she was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi. She continued to write columns and articles of a scholarly nature and wrote, I believe, one of her final articles, "*Beyond the Three R's: Teaching Respect and Responsibility.*" This was written for the *News Journal* of the Northern New England Resource Center.

In 1972 she went to St. Anselm's to teach in the education department and eventually was also an assistant chaplain. With the arrival of Sister Nivelles Berning, a friendship blossomed between her and S. Christopher. When S. Christopher was "down," S. Nivelles was there for her. When S. Nivelles became ill, it was S. Christopher's turn to give the care and support. Father Matthew Leavy, former abbot of St. Anselm's, said that it was a beautiful exchange of caring for one another.

S. Christopher was born in Glasgow, Montana, and raised in a family of eight: three boys and five girls. (Her sister, Marilyn Mangnall, is here to celebrate with us.) How S. Christopher found the College of Saint Benedict I do not know, but after her freshman year she entered Saint Benedict's Monastery. We became friends and that is when I discovered her wonderfully dry sense of humor. Sister Olivia Forster, our postulant prefect, remembers some of Christopher's clever sayings. One of her frequent comments, when facing a work assignment, or something of that nature, would be: **There must be a harder way of doing this!** When Minnesota's heat and humidity (as a Montana native!) got to her, she'd tell us how she was "threatening" God – if He (She) didn't "better" the weather, she'd leave the convent! S. Bernadette Weber recalls her wit when they were together in the novitiate. "As we were learning about detachment, S. Christopher raised her hand and said, 'I think I am attached to routine.'"

Most of us did not know S. Christopher well. She spent her summers back at her childhood home in Glasgow and did outreach ministry in the parish that first nourished her faith. The last summer in Montana, she was attempting to clean the bushes and trees around her house. One particularly tough branch suddenly broke as she pulled and sent her sprawling to the ground. The back injury caused much pain and was with her until she died.

Sister Christopher was faithful to her monastic profession; faithful to her friends; faithful to her educational values; and faithful to her God. I have the sense that in heaven S. Christopher's happiness gene has exploded and all those who loved her now surround her with dancing and singing. Do you think God is also dancing? I do.

"Lord, you know all things: you know that I love you!"

Sister Phyllis Plantenberg, OSB