

Reflection for Sr. Peg
Pam Rector

Peg Dolan, a woman for others. A woman grounded in prayer, scripture and the Eucharist. She lived her life to serve others. As a young sister, she longed to go to abroad to serve in developing countries. But God had other plans for her. As you look at her long life, her service has always been to those who came into her world: students in the residence halls and in Campus Ministry, parents of our students, alums on retreat or in service to others, the Gryphons, her Spiritual Directees, and her colleagues. Peg was a minister to the laity, a minister of love. She knew our daily struggles, our life-changing crises, our moments of unbridled joy. And just as God meets us where we are, so Peg met us in the moment and consoled us or celebrated with us.

As you look around Sacred Heart Chapel tonight, we each have at least one Sr. Peg moment. I met Sr. Peg when I was 17, a few decades ago! As I moved onto campus, I was a public school kid, and at that time there were very few of us. I was Catholic, but didn't have any of the nun stories that my roommates and hall mates who had attended to "Our Lady of this" and "St John of that" had. But even back then, meeting Sister Peg, I knew I was meeting someone special. I couldn't have predicted then, that we would have a lifelong connection, that she would be my spiritual director, that she would be with me through the deaths of both of my parents and the birth of my daughter. I didn't know then, that my image of God, through knowing Peg, would become wide enough to include the feminine face of God or that I would have my own moments of saying Yes and jumping into the mystery of God, knowing that nothing is impossible for God. If you had a minute or decades in Sr. Peg's company, you had an experience of God's love that changed you.

The gift Sr. Peg gave to each of us, in our own way, was the gift of Presence. When you were with Sr. Peg you had her FULL attention. She only had eyes for you. I can remember her focused gaze, the smiling face, the lilt of her voice, her holding on to your hands as you talked which drew you closer, the nodding head that said without words, "I'm right here with you." She would ask you how you were, and you knew she was asking you how your heart was feeling...and you told her. We all spilled out our joyful and proud moments, our hurts, and our life questions. How rare it is in life to have someone ask how you are, and truly listen to the response.

Sr. Peg often said that we are "each a word of God spoken only once." That belief permeated how she was with us and how she delighted in each of us. We are all unique, we offer to the world something that no one else can give, the way we are is the way we are meant to be; flawed, human, and longing for God. She helped us to see our trials and heartbreaks as gifts from God that shaped us into more of who we were becoming. Being with Sr. Peg gave me a glimpse of God's unconditional love for me, and for brief moments, I felt it and I embraced it.

How many of us have gone to Sr. Peg or had Sr. Peg come to us in difficult times? Sometimes she would just magically be there when you needed her the most. I had a

moment at the Religious Ed. Congress when it became clear to me, during a talk by Joyce Rupp that my time working in Lennox as a school counselor had come to an end. It was time for me to do something new. It was a surprise to me, but also a very clear and peaceful message. The first thing I wanted to do was to tell Sr. Peg. If you've been to Congress, you know there are tens of thousands of people there and my chances of finding her were slim to none. I decided to go buy the tape of the talk where I had experienced that 'aha' moment. Who was standing right there? Yup! Sr. Peg. I hugged her, hard, and said with tears in my eyes, "I'm quitting my job in Lennox." And she said, "I know you are." A moment of grace and confirmation. So many of us have had those moments with Sr. Peg throughout the years.

In reading the blog that Alumni Relations has set up for us to write our memories of Sr. Peg, I was struck by Megan Desmond's reflection that she hopes when God took Sr. Peg to heaven that a little bit of Sr. Peg is left within each of us. I am SURE that's the case. So how do we honor the life of Sr. Peg? Like small mustard seeds, we need to take the little bits of Sr. Peg that live inside of us and grow them. We need to be for others what Sr. Peg has been for us. Even if it's only once a day, we need to practice being fully present to another person like Sr. Peg was for us. Here at LMU, it is now up to all of us to carry on the Marymount tradition that Sr. Peg embodied. We also need to remind each other regularly that we are a "word of God spoken only once" and encourage each other to live as if that's true.

My heart aches with the loss of Sr. Peg yet her spirit, energy and love still surrounds us. Can you imagine her delight in seeing us all gathered together? Nothing gave her energy like spending time with "her people." And we were all her people.