

## **SISTER PEG DOLAN, RSHM**

### VIGIL: A EULOGY

Many times I have been here in Sacred Heart Chapel and seen Sr. Peg stand up at this ambo, just about now, at the conclusion of a Liturgy, and she would share a reflection or invite us to participate in something special that was happening on campus. Perhaps you can picture her, too, and from memory even hear her familiar voice. I feel she is very present to us, and, in ways known only to God, we are present to her.

I remember so well when Sister Peg came to LMU in 1973. It was the first year of the newly created Loyola Marymount University, formed from the merger of Marymount College and Loyola University. It was a time of deepening the partnership between the Jesuits, Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. She came here from Marymount High School, Santa Barbara. As she would often love to recount, she came for one year . . . and never left.

Perhaps you will agree with me that over the years Sister Peg was the “go-to person”, the “first responder” and sometimes, “the fixer”. It was not only what she did or how she helped you that you remember, it was her personal qualities of tremendous empathy and being one with you that made such a difference in your life. She loved people, and she loved to help. She loved living with students in a residence hall and loved being available to them day and night. She spent 33 years in the residence halls here at LMU, and before that, she had spent 14 years in the dorm at Marymount High School, Santa Barbara . . . a total of 47 of her 55 years as a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary was spent with students in the residence halls, and she loved it.

There’s a story that I think can tell us a good deal about her. Last April she had been hospitalized in the UCLA Hospital in Santa Monica. She had become very weak from chemo treatments and her blood count was not what it should have been. I can still see her sitting up in bed with the phone beside her. She was on oxygen and had an i-v in her arm. Each time the phone would ring, she would answer it with a strong voice, “This is Sister Peg. May I help you?” “May I help you” was so natural to her – in any and all situations.

She was involved with so many organizations and activities on campus. She loved them all, but one in particular had a special place in her heart: the Gryphon Circle. For those

unfamiliar with this group of students, the Gryphon Circle is involved in a variety of activities on and off-campus. It is rooted in the history and tradition of Marymount College and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Sr. Peg loved the Gryphons and had been their moderator for nearly 25 years. So many times I have come on campus, perhaps coming here to Sacred Heart Chapel for a special Eucharistic Liturgy, and I'd meet Peg. She would welcome me, often standing at the door of this Chapel with one of the Gryphons. Beaming with pride, she would delight in introducing each Gryphon and telling a little something about each one. She supported them in every way possible, and when it came time for the Gryphon Games in the Spring, we'd always get a call from Peg asking us to help sponsor the event, telling us, "We have to help the Gryphons!"

We Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary look to Mary as the first disciple of Jesus, and, as we say in our Constitutions, we try to live out in our own lives *the deep and active receptivity of her faith*, a faith that *empowered her by the Spirit to say YES to God in the face of the unpredictable and even the impossible, to say YES without condition*. Sr. Peg prayed for the grace to always be able to say her "Yes" to God, and she had a picture of Our Lady of Yes in her room, which she often used as a focus of her prayer. She made sure that that picture was right where she could see it in her room at Regina Residence in Orange. Peg and I talked about that picture and "Our Lady of Yes" on the day she died. She said, "I've always tried to live my "Yes", and "I pray that I will be able to live it for what lies ahead." Later that night, she died.

There are many ways that we will remember her, and these days and in the days to come, we will reflect on her legacy and what it all means. I will surely remember her as giving us an example of how to live our "Yes" to God, to be open to whatever God asks of us. It may be costly, it certainly was costly for Sr. Peg, especially during this last year, but she lived it with courage and deep, very deep faith. Perhaps it's that "Yes" that we can take with us, and hopefully her example will urge us on to make this gift of ourselves real in our own lives.

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October 16, 2009