

Sr. Kenneth Huelsing's Reflection

by Sr. Shirley Krull

February 17, 2020

To begin, there is a message from Sr. Kenneth. "The only request of the homilist I have is that they please tell all gathered, "I am most grateful to God and each one, being companions on my journey to my eternal home. And thanks for the memories along the way. I've been so blest in this life. Thanks again for just everything."

Family, friends, community, wasn't Kenneth great at living life!! She knew the incarnation! God was everything, everywhere, every, every, every existence for her. She knew how to say it in multitudes of stories! Fun, humorous, holy practical stories and sayings that she could whip out at any time.

Stop for a minute. Recall the many ditties that Kenneth knew so well and could repeat at any moment. We heard lots of them yesterday at the wake. Now let the picture of Kenneth's face come to your mind, the grin and the sparkle in her eyes when she would give off with one of those classics.

I have taken a specific path in my reflection because of a promise that I made many years ago to Sr. Kenneth. That promise will be revealed at the end of our reflection together on our sister.

We all know her as Kenny, Sr. Kenneth, Betty. As a Huelsing. In my thinking to be a Huelsing means having attributes that make for sainthood.

The first attribute is seeing life as it is, as real. Seeing life as Incarnational, seeing life as revealing God. This was Kenneth in all of her actions, her responses, her prayer. Her saying was: "I am who I am before God".

Then in the sainthood path - to accept the life that is my life. Living that life that is mine to live and living it with equanimity. Kenneth did that and so many times she lived the life that was her's with real gusto. She lived life believing this is the way of Francis, Clare and Mother Clara. Believing, living and making real the kingdom of God here.

Kenneth had a common sense spiritual life that was a blessing for herself and for those who shared with her. One day when I went to the convalescent center and we were in conversation, I talked with her about a section of the book I was reading. The author was making a connection between our baptism and the deep spirit center of our life. I said I thought I understood a small part of that, but really didn't know, She was listening to me with real intent and responded, "you take what is given to you. You let go of what you don't understand". My response today is, in thinking of Kenneth "So there it is". She had a generous, understanding spirit that, I think saw that there was always enough for everyone. We all experienced that abundance in her.

And then there was suffering and pain, taking that part of her life and meeting the suffering Christ there. Learning willingly what of the God life is in the suffering and with a response that was not dramatic, or self-effacing - just meeting the Christ there and living with and through the pain.

She lived the life that our Franciscan rule states. "When their initial formation is completed, they are to be received in obedience promising to observe this life and rule always. Let them put aside all attachment as well as every care and worry. Let them only be concerned to serve, love, adore and honor the Lord God, as best they can, with singleheartedness and purity of intention". Kenneth's saying repeated. "I am who I am before God." And the Gospel line: I have come to do the will of God who sent me".

The Huelsing sainthood for me is the out-going life of fun, humor, family, memory and a million and a half stories. Huelsing sainthood is the celebrating of two or three gathered and there love is - there God is present. Didn't Kenneth live in this spirit? I saw that at St. Patrick's and at the Convalescent Center. She lived in the spirit of the reading to the Romans, we heard today. "We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him".

Huelsing sainthood is paying attention to the heritage of community elders, community folk tales, to family preferences to finding the simple and right remembrance at garage sales and with joy handing that treasure on. I believe this came from the generosity of her spirit. She loved thinking of others when she visited these sales places.

Huelsing sainthood is relationship and friendship. One story from my family is the quiet sitting presence of Betty's family at my Mom's wake. Her brothers and their spouses sat the entire evening of the wake in a circle at the side of the room where my Mom's body was in the casket. I will always see them sitting there for us and with us.

Part of the Huelsing sainthood was from the home Kenneth experienced with her large family. She brought that home life with her to our community and she kept creating it for us by her constant watchfulness for the sisters and colleagues and what might be needed

We remember the deep, fun and caring relationship of Srs. Timothy and Kenneth. Oh the joy and revelation of God in friendship.

One of the ramblings of Kenneth and Timothy was about their desire for the hymns at their funeral. They were sure that one of their first choices would not be allowed. But they wanted it any way. So I promised Kenneth that we would sing:

"Oh when the saints go marching in.
Oh when the saints to marching in.
Oh I want to be in the number,
when the saints go marching in.

"Oh when the sun begins to shine
Oh when the sun begins to shine
Oh I want to be in that number]
When the saints go marching...