**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**



**Sister Diane Melanson**

July 12, 1953 -- September 29, 1991

“In my life, Lord, be glorified, be glorified.

In my love, Lord, be glorified, be glorified.

In my service, be glorified today. Alleluia"

- Gob Kilpatrick

The Lord be glorified in my life, in my love, in my service. These words sung at Sister Diane Melanson's funeral mass sounded so right because they had been so much a genuine part of her life. In March of 1991, during an especially difficult period   
of her struggle with cancer, she faced the ultimate possibility--death. The questions in her heart were an abyss of darkness. "Why? Why me? Why is Mother Foundress, who is healing others,

not healing me? I love youth ministry, and it is so necessary. Why would the Lord take that away? Why so young? I have so many plans." The agony was excruciating and many times she said, "Let this chalice pass away from me." But finally, she was, able to say "Not my will, but your will be done, God." Peace returned to her and she faced a dangerous operation with courage. Whatever the outcome, she chose life. If it meant life with the Lord in heaven, then she would celebrate her entrance into eternal bliss with a joyous mass of resurrection. With characteristic courage and determination, she planned the liturgy.

This mass would sing of God's tender care, His infinite mercy, His great glory, His mighty works, His redeeming grace. This mass would sing of her response to this great God, praise, joy, hope, and ever renewed faith. Her choice of readings and hymns clearly reflect what was in her heart. "Lift up your hearts to the Lord in praise of His glory." (Roc O'Conner) "One thing I ask, to dwell in the house of the Lord all my days. (Tim Manion) "Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the Kingdom of God." (David Hass) "I have summoned you by name, you are mine (Isaiah 43)","If it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12.2.4)" and "My soul longs for you." (Bob Dufford).

Sister Diane underwent extensive surgery in March. It was a near death experience, but she survived. She regained a little strength and this renewed her hope. She could still be healed through a bone marrow transplant and the persistent prayers of her Sisters, her family and her friends. Again, she chose life. The description of those last six months of her life on earth has to include intensity of living, joy in the Lord, self-forget­fulness, determination, extraordinary courage, humor, love of nature, loyalty to family, friends and community, a little emotional distancing and much pain, a little stubbornness and a talent for setting goals, serious reflection and light-hearted playfulness—all blended together in the uniqueness that is Sister Diane Melanson.

During those last months of her life, Sister Diane continu­ally set goals for herself, short term goals which she looked forward to attaining. She decided to direct one weekend at the Christian Life Center in Frenchville, and she did. It was farewell to the center, to the staff she had worked with and to the youth that she loved so well. Everyone remembers Sister Diane and her hats. She had acquired quite a collection over the years and used them as icebreakers in her youth sessions. These hats were symbolic of self. On her last weekend at the center, Sister Diane appeared at each session wearing a different hat. The question came to be, "What next . .? Would it be the red hat of her carefree days; the musical hat symbolizing her love of song? Or maybe the Mickey Mouse hat of her playfulness, or the soft crumpled hat of hervulnerability? It was a sensitive and humorous effort to put people at ease with the obvious effect of chemotherapy. It carried the weekend with a spirit of light-heartedness.

She clung to her appointment book and calendar. She still needed so much to organize and control her life. It was such an integral part of her. In April, she planned the 1991-1992 calendar of events for the Christian Life Center, hoping at this time to join the staff at least in January, 1992. In May, with the help of Father Jim Plourde, director, she finalized the schedule so it could be printed. In June, she met again with Father Jim Plourde, Father Angelo Levasseur, the new director, and Sister Cheryl Wells, who was to be her helper, to discuss plans for the coming year. They would start the year without her, and she would join them after recuperating fully. June 21-23, 1991, was a special target date for Sister Diane. She planned to be in Van Buren to celebrate with the Sisters and parishioners the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Good Shepherd Sisters. To the surprise and joy of the Sisters, she made it. She flew up and attended many of the festivities, reserving for herself times of rest and quiet. Once more, she had fulfilled a goal, lifegiving for herself and for all who met her.

In the past two years of her illness, on a daily basis, the Sisters petitioned Mother Foundress for her favorable inter­cession with the Lord for a cure. In June, a friend spent a week in Quebec, and Sister Diane commissioned her to pray to Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart with special insistence. Maybe her spirit remained closer to the places that had been significant in her life. Maybe she would listen more attentively to the persistent prayers. The friend came back with a picture of Mother Mary of the Sacred Heart that had been taken to all those signi­ficant places.

July saw a continued effort to overcome the disease and determination to set new goals. The doctor still held out hope that new aggressive chemotherapy might stay the progress of cancer. Sister Diane submitted to the treatments and planned her July goals: to attend, for at least one day, the Christian Leadership Institute in Windham, Maine, and to be in Old Town for the birth of a nephew, the first in the family. She attended the Christian Leadership institute and had the pleasure of holding her small nephew in her arms, though she could not go to Old Town. Faith in the young people at the institute and celebration of new life were hallmarks of her outlook on life. During this time, she still managed short impromptu picnics to the beach. The sea, especially the stormy sea with wild crashing waves, held a special fascination for Sister Diane.

August came and with it, the stark realization that her disease seemed impervious to any chemotherapy. Delvin Case, M.D. told Sister Diane that there was no other recourse. The agony of doubt and insecurity was upon her again. On leaving the doctor's office, she asked for the last time to be brought to the Maine shore. There she remained for about thirty minutes. She cried, she watched the power of the waves, the vastness of the ocean, the grace of the sailboats, and she let the beauty of it all once more penetrate her very being. Then she entered the hospital, Maine Medical, for the last time on August 15. She would remain there until September 25. Even during these last weeks at the hospital, she continued to hope and pray and plan to come back to her beloved ministry at the Christian Life Center in Frenchville. Finally, she set up one more goal, to return home to St. Joseph's Convent, in Biddeford, to die among her Sisters, her relatives and her friends.

During all these months of sickness, friends, family and Sisters rallied around Sister Diane in prayer and heartfelt concern. They phoned, they visited, they sent prayer messages, cards and letters. She hung these cards in her hospital room and took comfort in their messages of hope. She wanted friends to be around even when she was too weak to talk or pray. A friend walked in one day and Sister Diane was repeating with conviction, "Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me" an ever newly discovered truth in her life. "And my friend" she continued, "He loves you too." Mrs. Doris Melanson, Sister Diane's mother, spent the last weeks, from September 12 to the moment of Diane's death on September 29, at her daughter's bedside, keeping a loving, twenty-four hour vigil. Her mother's quiet strength, her three brothers' deeply felt concern, the loyalty of her many friends and sisters were a comfort to her and a sign of God's own love.

From the pages of her journal let us now let Diane tell us about her youth and early adulthood. "I was born July 12, 1953, to Joseph Lester and Doris Helen (King) Melanson of Old Town, Maine. I was the eldest of a family of four which included three brothers; Wayne, Gary, and John. The proud new parents were "tested" with crying and sickness for nine months but weathered the storm well. Christened Diane Marie Melanson, my godparents Mrs. Anita M. King (grandmother) and Lauriat L. King (uncle) proclaimed my "yes" to initiation into the church. Father Gilbert Dube welcomed me into St.   
Joseph Parish in Old Town, Maine, where I would be participating and growing. Faith formation continued at home with the recitation of family prayer's and visits to the church. At age five, formal education began at St. Joseph Elementary School in Old Town. Mrs. Agatha Bouchard, my first teacher, simply loved us into being. The spiritual journey continued as we pre­pared our hearts for first communion and celebrated this sacrament in May, 1960. Confirmation followed in 1961. Elementary school provided many happy hours, especially "after school" times, with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. One of my fondest memories is of working as a helper at St. Joseph Church with one of my teachers, Sister Edwina Pelletier. Many hours were spent in reverence and awe before the Blessed Sacrament. Sister Edwina had a very affirming way of dealing with young people and building their self-esteem. This third grade experience of service continued on through the years into high school when I worked summers as sacristan. The peace, the tranquil­ity of being present before the Lord to just whisper my thoughts, was a real plus in my life all those years.

As a youngster, the Holy Days were very special. Each day in the triduum saw me sitting at the edge of the bench soaking up the symbolism and waiting in anticipation of the events; trying to understand the mystery, to understand the suffering, the new life of Christ. To sit and ponder this God who loves us was indeed gift.

God's love was made manifest through my grand­mother, Anita, who taught me about unconditional love and the gift of being present to another. She taught me the beauties of nature. With her I went berrying; I fetched Christmas trees; spent time at our hunting camp. Creation fascinated me and revealed to me a loving, creative and humorous God. With the creation of ostriches and aardvarks, God had to have smiled.

My faith was put to the test at age 12 when my dad, whom 1 adored, died unexpectedly at 37, a victim of cancer. Dazed by this loss, I started wondering about a God who loves but calls young people to die. Eventually the wondering turned to anger. Fortunately, family and friends continued to love me and God con­tinued to wait for me to return to Him.

During my high school years, service at St. Joseph Church continued and expanded. I taught in religious education classes, I sang in a folk group, and I served on the parish council. I worked hard at school and graduated as salutatorian of my class at the Old Town High School.

I guess the thing that meant most to me in those years was sports. I became co-captain in both basketball and softball. During 1971-1975, I attended the University of Maine at Orono, majoring in physical education.

Though the Lord's call to religious life popped up several times in those years, I tried not to think about it. I had other plans but God continued to be patient with me. The University of Maine at Orono had an active campus ministry with lively discussion groups and a progressive folk group. These fulfilled a need I always had for church involvement. The desire to be part of a flourishing church was foremost as the desire to work towards justice grew deeper.

In 1975, this desire became fulfilled as I started work at the St. Andre's Group Home in Bangor serving unwed mothers--an unexpected change from the anticipated role of physical education instructor. The Sisters took a chance on a young college graduate. The experience was an eye-opener for me. It challenged me to share my love unconditionally; to develop my talents and to share my convictions; to grow as a person for others.

This time period continued to be a time of searching. What was I to do in life? What was God's will for me? Involvement with directing high school retreats had a big impact on me. It helped me break through some of my shyness and to realize that I could let people love me and I could love them. It served as an eye-opening experience of God. I was touched by God's presence in others. It was a high in my life. My angriness with God was resolved. A weekend spent with the Sisters of Roy Convent again brought up the possibility of religious life, but I was very slow to respond. And God still waited.

In 1977, I moved to Biddeford, Maine, a definite separation from family and hometown. I started my teaching career at: St. Joseph School. I took up the challenge of teaching as a way of being present to the children, of sharing with them knowledge, talents, joys, sorrows and love. I remained concerned that teaching might not be my way of reaching people, and I soon came to the conclusion that it was not my niche in life, though I would teach for seven years.

"You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last." (John 15:06)

As time passed, my desire to serve the Lord as a religious grew stronger. An influential friend gave me a gentle shove one day. I made contacts with various communities and in 1900. I became a pre-associate with the SCIM's. In saying "yes" to the Lord, I experienced moments of peace. It's difficult to come to know Christ. Every day is a challenge . . . a challenge to belong. I struggle to know Christ. I pray to Him and wait and sometimes am disappointed and become discouraged at His seeming lack of response. I would want Him to be present . . . that is "felt" presence . . . but often He's not. The hope for me lies in memories and in friends who help stir these memories that provide me with times or moments when I've known Christ is present. In spending time in the White Mountains this summer, I felt God to be close at hand. There have been songs that I have sung that speak to me, but sometimes the same song sung at another time means nothing. The times when I've felt Christ in my life carry ma over the "empty" times. My quest is not accomplished single-handedly. There are significant people in my life who help me to grow; who help me to question; who help me to discern; who love me and help me to accept the fact that I am lovable. These people help me to become myself . . . to find happiness . . . for to discover my own vocation can make the difference between living a love-filled life and merely existing or surviving in life."

In 1981-92, Sister Diane continued to teach, and she chose to live with the Sisters at Roy Convent. Her presence to, and active participation in that local community was experienced as very positive. She was enthusiastic and willing to contribute in every way to all it takes to build a vibrant community. Though, originally it had not been planned, this year was, in fact, considered as her pre-novitiate year.

Sister Diane became a novice in 1992-1984. Her first year as an apostolic novice was a difficult year. Frequent moves into different local communities proved emotionally draining..... too many new beginnings, new Sisters to meet and too many terminations for an introvert and a person who needs involvement in depth. Her canonical novitiate year was a year of special prayer and serious study of religious life. It was a time for reflection and shar­ing of aspirations. Always, for Sister Diane, it was a time of questions. She set high standards for herself. She needed to belong and the times she felt this, were moments of shared faith, moments of quiet conversation with friends and moments of playful celebration. The experience of intercommunity novitiate at the Mercy Motherhouse in Portland was especially growthfilled and supportive to her in its attempt to prepare novices for religious life in the future.

On August 12, 1984, Sister Diane said one more yes to the Lord. She pronounced her vows with the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She continued to teach for one more year at St. Joseph School. Then, in 1985, she went back to work at St. Andre Group in Bangor. In 1987, she worked at St. Joseph Convent where she proved again to be a woman of many talents. Finally, in 1988, she was able to fulfill her long-time aspiration--to work with Christian youth in a Christian life center, to help youth to deepen their sense of who Christ is in their life and to challenge them to authentic Christian living. The center was in Frenchville, Maine, land of the long winters and abundant snow, which she loved.

Sister Diane was a prolific writer of journals, letters, reflections, special prayers, and papers. The events of her life were carefully recorded but most significantly her thoughtful reflections on these events in the light of her faith in Christ. The following excerpts from her letters reveal the depth of her feeling and involvement in nature; in community; in friendship; in ministry in life itself.

"Seasons have passed quickly since the last time I sat at the type to send news updates from the CLC. Spring has finally burst forth in radiance in Northern Maine and all nature is proclaiming its praises to the Creator! There are many, many shades of green that blanket the hillsides as well as fields and fields of yellow that seem to illumine the countryside even when the sun doesn't shine. Farmers have been busy plowing the earth and preparing the fields once more for the seasonal planting. Newness abounds! I've had the opportunity to enjoy nature in all its splendor as I travel to and from Van Buren. I've taken time to look at things I've never experienced before. For example, I just missed the birth of a calf on one trip from work but took time to sit and contemplate the interaction of the mother and newborn in the pasture close to the road. I've traveled a lot this year with a camera and managed to capture a moose feeding in the swamp area by the road between Caribou and Limestone. Though cars gathered, the moose remained unintimidated and single-minded. I've also captured the wonder of Grand Falls as mega-tons of water poured through the gates and down the winding ravine in spring. It was a reflection of the creative power and the destructive power of such an essential element. A smaller treasure has been found in the hummingbirds that hover outside the office window, taking advantage of the lilac bushes that are currently in full bloom. Those tiny little birds sure persevere and are precise and determined! The phenome­non that still provides an awe experience is the rainbow . . . I'm so often reminded of covenant and fidelity. Thus travel still provides so' much to reflect upon and ponder. I've felt blessed and enriched this year!

So much has transpired since my last writing . . . As all .of you are aware, the new year rolled in with some surprises for us in Northern Maine. The automo­bile accident in January altered the usual routine and called forth a unity and bondedness at home and at work. The CLC schedule in January was such that it allowed me flexibility to be able to work at home or at the hospital and therefore allowed me time at TAMC during days or in the kitchen in V.B. I once again I enjoyed the opportunity to "create" meals and just putter in cooking.

We had a very successful GIFT retreat weekend for Freshmen and Sophomores. The retreat touched the lives of another 25 youth and assisted them in recognizing their Godgiven talents and giftedness. February continued to be snowy and blustery AND packed with events. CLC held another SEARCH weekend for Juniors and Seniors. Though there was low attendance, there remained a bonding that occurred and a deepening of trust and faith in the Lord. Many of the young people involved in the retreat came from Van Buren. The third weekend of February had both a Women's Cursillo (at the CLC) and the Winterfest for 550 youth (held in Caribou). Since I had commitments at both functions, I travelled between Caribou and Christian Life Center (CLC). God was indeed alive and well in both places as He grew from spark to flame in many folks' life. The youth were eager to attend their workshops on Prayer, Today’s Music and Message in Christian Context, and Christian Drama. The worship, prayer and social time created bonds that will be rekindled at Convention time. The Women's Cursillo likewise was going well. My time with them was well received.

There's so much to be thankful for this year. Ministry has been a real challenge, a real gift, and a real opportunity to grow. It's been more work than originally anticipated had Fr. Bob stayed, but worth the extra push needed to make it work! The one thing I will truly miss this summer is the youth sharing group which meets the first Tuesday of each month. The group had grown to almost 100 youth who would travel up to 1 hour and 15 minutes (one way) for sharing from 7 to 9 p.m. One youth would give a witness talk and then provide discussion questions for small group sharing. We would close the session with a different type of prayer' experience each month. I'd go home having received a lot more than I'd given! I really love those kids with their openness and truth! They're refreshing! It's so encouraging to see the church alive and well today!

I anticipate working on the CLI (Christian Leadership Institute) once again this summer at St. Joseph College. There's already a lot of chatter among the youth in the county about attending this institute. It's a great opportunity to learn leadership skills, build community, and grow in the love of the Lord! The youth that return to their parishes are usually sparked with desire to serve and reach out to the parish youth.

Alas, I need to come to closure. Thank you for your continued prayers throughout this year. I'm cer­tain that your intervention on behalf of the CLC assured that Fr. Jim and I were instruments that reached many people of the county this year. Know that T. sincerely appreciated your expressions of encourage­ment, your prayers, your inquiries, your support and your love throughout this year. This ministry is   
indeed one of the faith education in the church of today!

May the Lord Bless you and keep you!

May the Lord let His face shine upon you and be gracious to you!

And may the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!"

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“In one of your cards to me you reminded me of my deleting the suffering Christ from something I read for the novitiate entrance. Many times this year I've been reminded of the suffering and dying of Christ but also of the resurrection thereafter. I figure I am but scratching the surface of the pain and suffering that Christ endured and that many people today bear. I certainly don't want to trade places, but I would like to bear it in love and courage and still help those I can along the way.”

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"I have become more and more convinced that God doesn't give us pain and suffering, but He always guar­antees His strength and courage if I but turn to Him, trust and walk. The Advent scriptures reminded me of God's constancy, of His light, and the fact that nothing is impossible with God. There are days I feel like job but God waits!" "Speaking of journeys …. hasn't Advent been wonderful? I've had the privilege of participating in some very beautiful liturgies. The waiting, the .joy-filled expectation and the hope permeates the homilies, the season, the anticipation. The challenge to work at bringing the kingdom about in the world today remains constant, to reach out and bring the love and goodness to those who lack it in the world around us. I have had the opportunity to reflect a lot on how we touch other's lives in the varied ministries at Roy, St. Andre's Health Care, St. Andre's Group Home, St. Joseph's Infirmary, St. Joseph's School, retreat work, Youth Ministry and nursing. There's a richness not only here at Roy but throughout community as we respond to today's calls in social work and faith education! Mother Foundress has to be smiling down upon our efforts!"

Many friendships contributed to the richness of Diane’s life. The following excerpts will attest to their appreciation of Sister Diane as a friend.

" . . . Diane would remind me that a testimony to good works is that they endure after we are no longer involved directly in them. She had that way of looking at things.

In the 1980's came the shift from CYO to Youth Ministry, and Diane and I enrolled in the Certification Program sponsored by the Diocese. We wrote papers   
together that were marathons against the clock and functional long after they were handed in. I came across our paper' on Fostering Faith through Justice, Peace and Service the other day. It was close to 100 pages of practical, useful resource that both of us used, tested and found to be well received by the youth with whom we worked. If it wasn't practical and use­ful, Diane wouldn't let me put it in the paper. She was the editor of our team. She had the uncanny   
ability to evaluate the success of ministerial moments and suggesting adaptations came easily to her. She saw things with clarity.

Diane saw her illness with the same clarity. From the day that she received the initial word about this "cancer" thing, she plotted a course that would enable her to continue to serve the Christian Life Center from afar. She had dreamed so long of being in the ministry she loved that she wasn't going to give it up easily. Nor was she going to give up life easily!

Fierce competitor, that was her, even against cancer. Up until the last week of her life, she was working, planning and encouraging others to get on with the business of life.

Somewhere there is a-plaque with the phrase "you can't pick your relatives, but you can pick your friends." I am very sure that God picked Diane for me   
as a friend.

The gift that Diane brought to life was not just for me alone. There were hundreds of youth and adults who were touched by her presence in their lives. I was privileged to witness her ability to relate to youth at the Christian Leadership institute that she helped to staff each summer. As a director, she wove experience, reflection, action and commitment into each presentation. She was available, open, warm and compassionate   
to the youth who participated and to those of us who were on the team. This past summer, Diane made the trip out to St. Joseph's College to see "her" kids from the north during the parish sharing time on Tuesday. She needed to rest after her visit, it was hard for her to be there and not be involved.

It is in response to having been gifted by Diane's presence in my life and having seen the gift that; she has been to others that prompted the establishment of the Sister Diane Melanson Scholarship fund for those youth who desire to be trained as leaders in our Church. This training takes shape for our youth in the Christian Leadership Institute and Advanced Ministry."

- Kathy Ferrick

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"When I think of Diane, the French expression joie de vivre" comes to mind. Diane so loved living. So many things excited her: the sun, the snow, clouds, mountains, lightening, big storms, the beach (day or night, winter or summer), young people and the elderly, her gradual opening to and awareness of God's infinite love.

She pursued life with such energy, such joy. Her enthusiasm was contagious and her laughter infectious. I remember our years teaching at St. Joseph School. I'd be in my classroom getting ready for "the day," and hear Diane's laughter echoing down the hall from the office where she would have shared some joke or anecdote. On a good day, it would make me smile; on a bad day I'd get jealous that she could laugh at all.

It was not Diane's way to sit on the sidelines. She was coach of the girl's softball and basketball team, folk music director, and competitor extraordinary. But with those she loved she could make the shift from competitor to encourager. Diane helped people believe in themselves. As Kathy Ferrick wrote to Diane's family, Diane really jumped into things figuring she could accomplish them; and if it didn't turn out right the first time, she enjoyed the process of trial and error until she worked it out. If Diane decided to work on something, she saw it through to completion and a job well done. With those of us she took under her wing, she shared that same enthusiasm and focus. She made you believe you could do whatever it was you felt insecure about.

There was within Diane an unsuppressible child. As you probably know her plan was to visit Disney World and Epcot when she conquered her cancer. That desire was so expressive of her. Nothing sophisticated—her goal was to play and he with children and young people again in a place that was fantasy. What "spirited" her during her illness was the childlike attitude (gift) she had that allowed her to "enter" a holiday, or season, or a moment and enjoy it so deeply, that the less happy aspects of life fell away, if only for a spell. Again, she was able to bring others along with her, if only they were open to her spirit of fun and sometimes, awe.

I've gone through acme of fry letters from Diane, hoping to find some of her own words for you to use if they seemed appropriate. All I could find came from a letter from 1985, when Diane was working at St. Andre's and wanting so much to go into Youth Ministry as she did before she died. " . . . we only have four resi­dents which makes me wonder what I'm doing with my life when there are so many unchurched youth . . . youth talent that could be tapped . . . youth leadership to

develop." That's the best I can do but maybe it will prove useful.

As I look back to our many walks on the beach and talks in the car, I think of how Diane changed in her relationship with God. Early on, when she was still an associate, she felt Psalm 139 portrayed a rather hostile, vengeful God. I contested that; view as quite opposite of my own; that it was a loving God who was aware of our weakness and who tried to lead us and he us and who created us out of love. I also remember that she just wasn't quite sure of Mary. She certainly appeared a bit weak for Diane's taste. Over the years she remained open and gradually Ps. 139 became one of her favorites; and after courses in Mariology and her own prayer, Diane developed quite a devotion to Mary and began to say the Rosary. I include this because it is indicative of Diane's openness even while she is somewhat resistant--at least about some things . . . "

--Donna Kleiner

"Sister Diane was fun to be around no matter what was happening. Her sense of humor was contagious, and she always saw the very bright side of a situation no matter how gloomy it appeared to be to others. Sister Diane was also a very good listener. She wasn't prone to giving advice, but would sit quietly and listen to my various predicaments, sometimes chuckling at the absurdities of my situations. It was her way of help­ing me to diffuse a situation. No matter what was going on in her life, she was always there for me. Sister Diane was a person filled with love. She gave it freely to all." - Doria Lausier

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"Please be my friend, because I know that God is with you." (Zech. 8:23) Those words touch my heart because they bring me back to the beginning of my friendship with Sister Diane. Diane was a gift to me. I shared my family with her over a good meal and a good game of cribbage. She shared her love for music and her love for youth with us. Sister Diane taught me to love unconditionally. She taught me about hope and miracles; something she believed in all the way to heaven. I was blessed to spend the' last few days taking care of her, as she was dying. I consider that another gift of God. As I repositioned her for the last time, it was my turn to be God's gift to her and I whispered in her ear, "I love you my friend." - Rena Paradis

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"I am sorry for the loss of your dear daughter Diane. She was a fine gentle-woman. It was a privilege to have been involved in her care. She was always so cooperative and. helpful. I wish more could have been done.

Knowing that she was a real Christian, we can look forward to seeing her in heaven. However, for now, I will miss her." -Delvin Case, M.D.

In the end, Sister Diane set one more goal for herself, to spend her last days at home with her Sisters and family. And she did. She arrived by ambulance at St. Joseph Convent on Wednesday, September 25, 1991. Her joy at being home gave her a last burst of energy. She greeted Sisters and staff and visited the chapel and dining room. She even prepared herself a sandwich and ate it. That same evening, Sister Diane started to lapse into long periods of unresponsiveness from which she roused periodically to recognize friends and relatives and greet them with affection. At one point a Sister said to her, "Diane, we did not get our miracle." She answered firmly, "Yes, we did. I now accept to die." Many who loved her dearly were consoled in their deep sorrow by the peace and serenity with which she lived those last days.

She recognized Father Jim Plourde when he arrived Friday morning and asked him how he was. In her confusion she wanted to work with him and return to the Christian Life Center. She recognized family members when they arrived, her brothers, their wives and a tiny newborn nephew. "I love you, I love you, I love you" she repeated several times to those around her. A radiant smile prompted her mother, Mrs. Doris Melanson, to ask, "What do you see, Diane?" "Light," she responded. Early Saturday morning, September 28, she repeated a priest friend's name three times as if calling to him. Father Normand MacPherson died that very morning, preceding her by just one day. By far the most touching moment of this last Saturday was her spontaneous and joyful singing of what sounded like an Alleluia, a very fitting last utterance for one who loved song and play and celebration. She was ready to enter the forever celebration that is heaven. Her brother, Wayne, speaking for the family, released her of any concern that might still be hers. Each family member, each friend expressed their love for her and said their last good-bye.

Sister Diane died at 2:10p.m. on Sunday, September 29, 1991, on the feast of the Archangel Michael. She was buried on October 2, 1991, on the feast of the Guardian Angels. Most appropriately, the following hymn was sung at the mass of the resurrection, a hymn she had chosen six months before:

"May songs of the angels welcome you and guide you along your way. May the smiles of the martyrs greet your own as darkness turns into day.

Every fear will be undone and death will be no more,

As songs of the angels bring you home before the face of God." (Bob Dufford, S.J.)

Bishop Amedee Proulx, Auxiliary Bishop of Portland, officiated at the funeral and the following priests were co-celebrants

Rev. Michael. J. Henchal, Attendant

Rev. James S. Plourde, Homilist

Rev. James E. Connor, Chaplain, Bay View Convent

Rev., Robert: Vaillancourt

Rev. Leonard A. Frechette, Chaplain, St. Joseph Convent

Rev. Leopold j. Huot, Chaplain, St. Joseph Convent

Rev. William Ni.. Barter

Rev. Real Nadeau

Rev. Lawrence J. Conley

Rev. Richard Ouellette

Rev. Gerald A. Levesque

Rev. James F. David, CSC

Rev. James L. Nadeau

Rev. Daniel Issing, CSC

Family, friends, Sisters, youth ministers, diocesan staff and young people filled the Bay View Convent Chapel to overflowing. They came from all parts of the State of Maine, even from as far as Steubenville College in Ohio, a credit to her love for youth and her unselfish service to them.

In April of 1992, the annual Maine Youth Ministry Convention was dedicated to the memory of both Sister Diane Melanson and Father Normand MacPherson, in recognition of their work with youth in the diocese of Portland. On a plaque presented to Mrs. Doris Melanson we read:

Dedication

Maine Youth Ministry Convention

The Youth Ministry family of the Diocese of Portland

wishes to remember with love Sr. Diane Melanson, S.C.I.M.

July12, 1953 - September 29, 1991,

a friend and advocate for Maine Youth.

A fitting tribute to an outstanding young religious, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

**Sister Bernardine Doucette, s.c.i.m.**

November 13, 1992