

Obituary

Sister Beverly Hindson, IHM, died Nov. 21, 2020, at ProMedica Flower Hospital in Sylvania, Ohio, after a brief illness. She was 73 years old.

Beverly Hindson was born in Detroit on July 28, 1947, to Lawrence and Rosemary (Steinmetz) Hindson and grew up in Marine City, Mich. She attended Holy Cross Grade and High Schools, graduating in 1965. Following graduation, she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Monroe) and received the name Sister Rosalita.



Upon earning a bachelor's degree from Wayne State University, Sister Beverly entered the educational arena as librarian at Immaculata High School (Detroit). During these years, she began studies in hospital ministry to become a chaplain, as well as earning a master's degree. Her first position as chaplain was at Mercy Hospital (Port Huron). In 1982 she joined the Pastoral Care Department at Children's Hospital of Michigan (Detroit) and remained there for more than 30 years. She ministered to patients and staff, developing lasting friendships with co-workers and families of patients. She ministered to children experiencing health issues in a unique way, touching their hearts by talking and playing with each one. In turn, their parents received her care by her work with their children.

As part of her life-long learning, Sister Beverly was educated as a critical care response team member, in critical incident stress management, spiritual care in end-of-life issues, pain management and loss. She received many acknowledgements of her pastoral ministry throughout the years.

In retirement, Sister Beverly continued her pastoral ministry as a volunteer at All Saints soup kitchen, as a chaplain at Angela Hospice and to a wide circle of retired co-workers from Children's Hospital. She continued building community through an amazing network of friends and colleagues until her health recently declined.

Remembering

On the morning that I learned that Bev's going home to our loving Father was imminent, I found within myself an inexplicable desire to revisit the reflection

that she had written for her Golden Jubilee celebration. While it is not unusual for me to spend hours trying to locate lost documents and missing belongings, my copy of Bev's thoughts on that important occasion seemed to mysteriously appear within minutes of initiating the search. I found her words compelling as I read them that morning. In time, I came to see that Beverly had prepared her own remembering. My job was to edit rather than to compose.

On that grand occasion, Bev wrote:

Most of you probably thought you were coming here to celebrate my life which is indeed true, but with it is also my desire to honor each of you as family, sisters, friends, and colleagues. You have brought me to this moment. You have shared with me the joys, hopes, and sorrows of all of humanity. You have shared your faith and your struggles. You have called me to ministry. You have challenged me to grow. You have allowed me to journey with you. In each of your lives you have shown me a facet of an ever-living, ever-loving God who gives us God-life through the events of the daily and not so daily.

I have been given so much, in the sharing of our lives, our friendships and relationships, so much has been poured into my lap. Thomas Merton says, "the idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another." Frederick Buechner reflects that "vocation is that place where your own deep gladness and the world's hunger meet."

The roots of this celebration of Bev's life began more than 72 years ago — in her family. The gifts of life and faith which were nurtured by her mom and dad, Lawrence and Rosemary Hindson, her sister, Kathy, and her brother Denny, her grandparents and her huge extended family led her to pursue her call to religious life. Her ability to care for others came from her mom and dad. In her home, there wasn't a lot of talk about caring for others or about how people should be treated. It was, rather, taught by example. Bev knew that she could be feisty, and she felt that she had learned that at home as well. When Bev mused that life was unfair, her mother would counter with "Who said it was?" If the three Hindson children were fighting as siblings do, her mom would make them shake hands and apologize before going to bed so that they could begin a new day without blemish.

To her IHM sisters, Bev wrote:

I extend my gratitude for our journeying together. Our years together have been filled with constant change and challenge. The future with our ever-aging membership and dwindling numbers promises more change and still more challenge. To you and with you, I recommit myself — it is you with whom I have cast my lot. I acknowledge the pain of the death of community as I have known it up until now but I believe I am capable, we are capable of continued growth as women of faith in a church of challenges which struggles to recognize women in ministry. Like the Lion in ‘Wizard of Oz,’ my favorite movie, I, too need courage.”

If you ever had the opportunity to travel with Bev, you know that she was always running into friends, colleagues and acquaintances. She influenced their lives just as they influenced hers. Bev collected friends no matter where she went - from her childhood in Marine City to the days of early formation in Monroe; from Wayne State University where she earned undergraduate and graduate degrees to Immaculata High School where she taught for over six years; from Vista Maria to clinical pastoral training at University Hospital in Ann Arbor; and from Mercy Hospital in Port Huron to her long and fruitful years at Children’s Hospital of Michigan.

After three years in formation in Monroe, Bev found Wayne State “a wonderful, earth-shattering experience” ... and she treasured those years.

Bev enjoyed her years at Immaculata where she taught her students as they taught her. In those years, she thought of herself as “a baby nun,” just eight years older than her juniors and seniors.

It was then that her life began to change. Three of her students had brothers who met violent deaths. While she valued the rich tradition of Catholic education, Bev began to question where the Church was when people from 18 to 90 years of age were hurting. Her request to study led to her Clinical Pastoral Education at the University of Michigan Hospital. She found working with adult cancer patients a whole new world. This training led to a brief two years working on the oncology team at Mercy Hospital of Port Huron.

In 1982, Bev found a home at Children’s Hospital of Michigan as a pioneering member of the pastoral care team. For 32 years, she had the privilege of working

with the most loving, dedicated professionals she had ever known. Her days were spent between the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (where nurse managers would tell the unit clerk, “to get the nun here”), 6-W (the oncology floor), and the oncology clinic. If that wasn’t enough, Bev also carried the code pager for the Emergency Room.

As she reflected on her 32 years at Children’s, Bev wrote:

It was here that I knew I’d arrived! I became the “Kid Whisperer.” The little ones confided in me the secrets of their hearts because I was their playmate-friend. Children’s work is play ... and play we did! The kids gave me many names: Mr. Beverly, Bevo, Bubble Auntie, The Queen of Hearts, Grandma Beb, and Tickle Monster, to name a few. I often managed to win over even the most frightened child.

Our chief of psychiatry once asked me if I knew a teen who had recently had her third kidney transplant and was psychotic. I did know her and the next time I went to visit her, I brought a rubber stamp with me. I told her I would put my hand over hers to stamp. For three days, there were no words, no eye contact. On the fourth day, there was eye contact. On the fifth day, she spoke, asking me to bring the stamp back. When we visited, we talked about how difficult it was to have such invasive surgeries, how hard it was to be sick and to be filled with fear. In time, the doctor asked me what I had done. I knew that I had made it safe for her to be herself again.

Families and patients often raised the injustice, the unfairness of serious illness and death among the young. There were no answers to the unanswerable questions; just personal presence and the freedom to explore the fragility of life and death. Often the children just needed to be affirmed, to be validated, to have their fears and anger listened to without judgment. Sometimes when I ventured into the clinic, I looked for the most frightened parents, attempting to ease them into a first visit. The children learned to expect my presence with them on their weekly visits to receive chemo, infusions, finger pokes, and bone marrow aspirations. The kids taught me everything I know in my head because they taught me how to experience it in my heart. It was a spiritual experience to be with these young patients — playing with stamps, blowing bubbles, being silly, or discussing the secrets of their hearts. It was, I learned, holy ground.

Over the years, I've been asked how I survived such intense, painful ministry for so long. All I can say is that I developed a web of relationships both within and outside of the hospital. My family, my religious community, and my friends provided support. At Children's Hospital, the members of the staff had each other's backs. As I provided support for others, I was also supported. I've also had my own personal survival methods: prayer and meditation, being with friends, as well as greeting card production — all sources of deep joy.

My ministry was rather simple in its intent; I just wanted children and families to feel loved as they faced an arduous journey. I wanted my presence to be a tangible yet unspoken sign that God cares and is present in the midst of fear, anxiety, pain, and suffering.

Over the years, many called Beverly to ministry — her family, IHMs, friends, children, their families, physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, security guards and unit clerks. Beverly treasured being part of so many lives just as many treasured the light and love that she brought into their lives.

On her page in the IHM Book of Life, Bev reflected on how her many years in hospital chaplaincy challenged her to reflect on the ultimate questions. She thought that the most important question comes at the end of the story of Lazarus in the Gospel of John:

“I am the resurrection.
If anyone believes in me, even though they die they will live,
and whoever lives and believes in me
will never die.
Do you believe this?” (John 11:26)

Her response to this question was clear and offers us hope: “I believe this question to be part of each day of my life ... Do I believe? Do I believe the wonder and awe of what Jesus promises and do I act accordingly? This is LIFE...LIFE to the FULLEST!”

Written and delivered by Kathleen Budesky, IHM, Nov. 30, 2020