Remembering Sister Barbara Cardinal, IHM  
July 24, 1936 – Aug. 19, 2013

These are the words I imagine Barbara would say to us as we gather and share the gift of her presence among us. I believe they express how she envisioned community throughout her life, all the people she met, whether briefly or over a span of time. In her memory, I offer them to you.

Thank you for being with me at times of my mountain tops, my plateaus, and, yes, especially my desert times.

I was not alone growing up. Family was ever-present: meals, weddings, celebrations of all kinds. Giggling in the halls at Immaculata; sharing holidays on Lawton Avenue; sleeping crosswise in the beds with all the other O’Brien cousins.

I was not alone as a young woman coming to Monroe. I felt my family’s support and my classmates’ enthusiasm, companionship, love and prayers.

I was not alone as I traveled on God’s beautiful Earth and saw and heard much. I enjoyed the mountain peaks in Wyoming, the sea in Ireland, the wonders of China. I shared with you the splendor of each destination, through photographs, memories and treasures brought home.

I was not alone when the winds of doubt and despair crept along the desert sand of my life like dried sage to try and steal my belief in myself and my God away with them.

I was not alone when I learned to miter corners, sew on bindings, dye material, start a stash or use thangles. My quilting sisters were present to teach and guide, helping me to weave my love of color and design in new and exciting expressions of love and life.

I was not alone in my efforts to provide independence and grace to those with disabilities, who often have difficulty finding ways to cope in the world that at times sets them apart.

I was not alone through battles with health: doctor appointments, consultations, surgeries, after-care, and rehabilitation. You were there to support and advise, comfort and care.

On the morning of Aug. 19, 2013, I fell into the arms of my caring, nurturing, strengthening God.
The God of
my waking and sleeping,
my working and playing,
my living and dying.
I was never alone.

With Barb’s words in our hearts, I share this blessing.

O God, we praise you for your goodness and graciousness.
Make us worthy, Lord!
O God, we praise you for our beautiful abundant earth!
Make us caretakers, Lord!
O God, we praise you for your mercy and patience.
Make us penitent, Lord!
O God, we praise you for your earthly banquet of bread and wine transformed for
Barb into a heavenly banquet, spread out for her to feast upon for all time and
space!
Make us ready, Lord!

Offered by Margaret Clor, Aug. 22, 2013

Barbara Cardinal was the middle child of Wilfred and Florence (O’Brien) Cardinal, born July 24, 1936, in Highland Park, Mich. Her brother, Ed, was the older and Margaret younger. Barbara leaves nine nieces and nephews and several grand-nieces and nephews. Her family was one of her greatest joys.

Barbara attended St. Gregory Grade School and St. Gregory and Immaculate High Schools. She entered the congregation in September 1954. She earned both a BA and MEd from Marygrove College.

Barbara’s ministry could be divided into three significant periods:
1) Her years when she taught primary children and then began transitioning into specializing in the teaching of reading. This was her ministry for her first 17 years.
2) She then moved to Wyoming where, for 13 years, she worked as a reading specialist and/or pastoral minister.
3) Following a sabbatical out west, she worked with people with serious disabilities, which she did in the Detroit area for about 16 years. Most of that time was with the United Cerebral Palsy Association.

During recent years she had been an independent advocate and facilitator for people with disabilities and their families.

In all her years with people with serious disabilities, Barbara was recognized and esteemed as a competent, dedicated advocate for their needs and dignity. She struggled hard that her clients
would be allowed to make those decisions affecting their lives, which in fact they were able to do. Her profound respect for them and their capabilities required her to do so.

At tomorrow’s liturgy, gifts representing Barbara’s great love of life and creation, people and possibilities will be brought to the altar by members of her family and some of her friends. They will do this in her name, as a final offering of the life she lived and loved. They will do this celebrating her gifts and presence among us. I’d like to share with you some of the gifts which will be brought to the altar and some of their significance for her. These gifts witness to themes she embraced and lived out with full heart.

The first gift will be two pictures, one of her family whom she loved beyond measure. The other picture is of her profession class on the occasion of their Golden Jubilee. From both her family and her congregation, life was given her; life was nurtured in her; life was affirmed by them. She was deeply, deeply loved and she knew this to be true. She felt enormous gratitude to and for her family and the congregation. And both her family and the congregation were changed because of her.

Another gift that will be brought to the altar will be some of her canned tomatoes, salsa and jams. She absolutely radiated when showing others her most recent harvest, not so much because of what she had done, but because of the miracle of it all. She knew “farming” required hard work, tender oversight, watering and weeding. At the same time, a good harvest was still a miracle! One of her favorite ways of sharing her produce was by canning some of her tomatoes and by making jams. She loved most of all sharing them with others, which she did. Love of Nature, of simple living, of neighborliness, of sharing were made more visible because of how Barbara tended her gardens and presided in her kitchen. She loved in the ‘homiest’ of ways.

One of Barbara’s most treasured experiences of ministry happened during her years in Wyoming. During those years she immersed herself in a place, a culture, a way of living and being that regarded all of creation in ways she intuitively knew but probably hadn’t embraced as wholeheartedly as she did in Wyoming. She felt a deep welcoming and acceptance and found herself “at home” in new ways. It appears her years in Wyoming were, for her, like a long retreat is sometimes for others: life-changing and life-enriching. I think it fair to say, Barbara was never the same after those years. Her life took on a meaning and ease and immersion that led her deeper. It also helped her begin to identify with whom and how she would do ministry when she returned to Detroit. She “heard a new call” and “it was hers!” The gifts which symbolize her love and embrace of the many things she internalized from her time in Wyoming will include a drum, a feather and some needlepoint.

Another gift that will be brought will be a quilt, symbolizing a skill and gift she discovered for herself and which she shared with others. She did this by giving some of her quilts away or by teaching people how to make them. Barbara was a “community woman” and she saw the possibilities of quilting as a means of bringing people together as well as helping people “bring together the pieces of their lives” into beautiful wholes. Barbara spent hours learning how to quilt; making them; teaching others how to make them; sharing them. There’s a process in all this, and Barbara was “master of the process.” Her way of “teaching the process of quilting” resulted in many successful new quilters!
While in Wyoming, Barbara was given a quilt by some of her friends there. During a conversation with her DPOA (durable power of attorney) some time later, Barbara instructed her to make sure that when she died her body would be buried in this quilt. One can only imagine all she thought of and felt as she made that decision.

Finally, a statue of Woman will be brought forward, reminding us of Barbara’s strong commitment to advocate on behalf of all women, striving to provide services for them which would improve the quality of their lives, especially those living with disabilities. She longed that women throughout the world would be able to live richer, healthier lives no matter their circumstances and/or disabilities. This was an ever-present goal for Barbara, of which she never tired.

Barbara lived a full, loving, creative life doing all she could to make the world and the people with whom she lived and worked BE more accepted, more loved and more respected than ever. She embraced everyone and enjoyed the gift of friendship thoroughly. She was truly one in a million and we’re lucky to have known her.

Barbara, we believe you are with God in ways you never imagined, and while we do and will miss you, we also feel grateful for who you were with us, and for what God is now for you. Thank you dear, creative sister, aunt, friend and advocate.

Offered by Mary Agnes Ryan, IHM
Aug. 22, 2013