

Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare
Saginaw, MI

Hope in dark times

During this last year our Poor Clare Community of four sisters here in Saginaw has gone through some dark times. Our two older sisters, Sister Bernie (age 97) and Sister Laurene (age 87), developed serious health problems. They could no longer care for themselves. Sister Laurene became dizzy and confused. She spent 100 days in physical therapy working to recover her speech and balance. Sister Bernie was able to care for herself except in regard to her medications and meals. However, she also became confused, and we were not comfortable leaving her alone. We slowly realized that both sisters were going to need long-term assisted living. This realization began a dark time for us and is a dark time many families face today as family members age and need special care.

We began the serious and painful conversations with both women about their need for nursing home care. They did not want it, and we did not want it for them. We had always intended and wanted to care for them at home. Gradually however, as we prayed about the situation, our older sisters became more aware of the stress we were all experiencing. There were many with frantic trips to the emergency room due to falls or sudden illness, and many trips to the doctors without any change for the better. After many months of this unsettled living, when we asked Sister Bernie a question about her future, Sister Bernie replied quietly that she wanted to do what was best for us, the caregivers.

It was at this point when we began to see light in our dark times. We began to experience God's hand very near to our broken hearts, and God's hope and light surrounding and caring for all four of us.



Valentines day at our "second home"

When two adjoining rooms opened up at a local care facility, both sisters agreed to move there at the same time. The comfort of having each other eased their transition. Soon they were playing their favorite card games in the dining room. Now and then they needed help in finding their rooms after eating, but gradually they became more adventurous and accurate as they

moved around with their walkers. We have noticed a steady improvement in their health. On occasion we bring our Sunday meal to eat with them and to play a card game. Sometimes Sister Laurene calls us with a lilt in her voice to ask if we would like to know who won the card game last night!

The change in our community life caused by the move of our elder sisters has not broken our

community life. We call the facility where our sisters now live our "second home." What once felt like the death of our community life together has changed. Instead of a death in our community, we have all experienced a new dimension in our prayer ministry and our lives.

Sometimes, we cannot see the hand of God at work in our lives. All we see is the darkness and despair. However, just like the discouraged disciples grieving the death of Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24, we also may have our eyes opened to God's eternal presence with us and see hope and light in the midst of darkness. "The Lord has risen indeed..." Luke 24:34.

(We are interested in your thoughts. Let us know at:
<http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>)

Sr. Laura and Sisters