



How one person expanded my heart

These days of unusually warm weather in Illinois are a bit confusing for me. Things are out of season. It feels like I could already plant my tomato seedlings; however, the possibility of colder weather would dampen my expectations of a fall harvest.

My age is revealing a confusion in me as well. Recently a friend died. When I saw the Facebook announcement, I could feel myself catch my breath in surprise. Usually, I can prepare myself for death announcements by reading the obituaries; now they can come at unexpected times and in unexpected places.

My friend's name is Michael. When we first moved to Saginaw over 30 years ago, personal computers were the new thing. I needed a digital logo for our identity and mailings. I found a book on computer design that I liked. I contacted the author to see if he would help me with my project. He suggested a colleague of his, Michael Clark, who called me a few days later.

We worked together for two decades using his calligraphic skills to create Christmas and greeting cards that my community sold. We both felt the scriptures were powerful transforming words that

could change and inspire our spirits. His first calligraphy for us was a memorial card: "In death life is changed, not ended." After all these years, I still feel it is beautifully done.

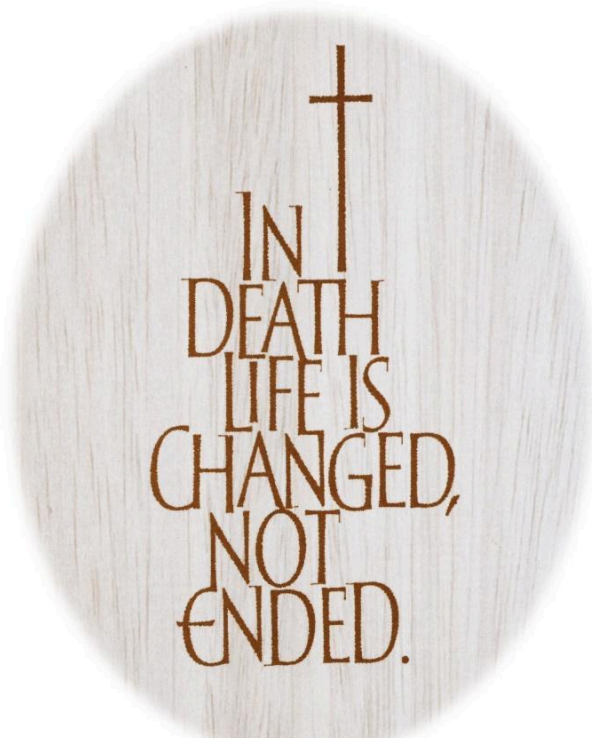
Our relationship was not always a bed of roses.

There were missed deadlines, designs that didn't work, and communication problems. Through all those years, we pushed on because we needed each other. I liked his work and he enjoyed working with the scriptures.

A day came when there was a parting of our ways. In hindsight it was time for change, though it was very painful. We had experienced a lot together: the birth of his children and our ability to provide a way to keep the Spirit of God present with scriptural art.

I loved Michael though he frustrated me. I know I was an important person in his life, too. We reconciled about a year later. Soon after that he

was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Slowly he lost his strength to do calligraphy and eventually to talk on the phone. I moved from verbal communication to writing at Christmas and his birthdays and sending him our newsletters. His voice was silent and ended when I read his obituary on Facebook.



Designed by M. Clark

I tell you all this, even though I only met him once in person, because we had a long history of knowing each other. Our relationship included fun and delight at times and frustration at other times. It was for me a real relationship: we met on the common ground of our deepest values and worked out the rest of our individual humanity along the way. He changed me and I'm better for his presence in my life.

Memories can be a golden gift of age. No longer struggling to accomplish, I treasure these memories in my life. I hold the image of the sky meeting the horizon: our earthly experiences encountering our heavenly reality. For me, that is the place of the heart: where I have learned how to love someone with all his humanity and mine while developing the qualities that expand the heart. I seek the

qualities of compassion, forgiveness, kindness, care, love, and everything else that is demanded to soften and tenderize us from our own selfish selves.

Michael, thank you for humanizing me and helping me develop a gentle heart. My love and prayers go with you as you continue your journey.

For now, I will wait a few weeks before I plant my tomatoes. They need the warmth of the sun – just as we do – to protect and care for this tender life we all share.

Your *Companions in Prayer*,

*Sister Laura in community
with Sister Dianne*

"I hold the image of the sky meeting the horizon: our earthly experiences encountering our heavenly reality. For me, that is the place of the heart."

Close to Our Hearts

We want to thank our many, many individual donors who make our ministry possible. We also want to thank and list the numerous organizations who support our work. You are truly our *Companions in Prayer*.

Blessed Sacrament Parish
Blessed Trinity Parish
Franciscan Capuchin Friars
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor
Fraternity of St Thomas More
Fraternity Queen of Angels
Fraternity Troubadours of St Clare
Holy Trinity Parish
Knights of Columbus #7582
Knights of Columbus Council 4232
Ladies Auxiliary K of C
League of Catholic Women

Midland, MI
Frankenmuth, MI
Detroit, MI
Cincinnati, OH
Shelby Twp, MI
Midland, MI
Warren, MI
Bay City, MI
Freeland, MI
Saginaw, MI
Saginaw, MI
Saginaw, MI

Missiondale Sisters
Our Lady of Grace Parish
Parish Evaluation Project
Savant Group
St Catherine of Siena Parish
St Dominic Parish
St John Vianney Parish
St Joseph Parish
St Peter Parish
St Thomas Aquinas Parish

Saginaw, MI
Sanford, MI
Milwaukee, WI
Midland, MI
Bay City, MI
Saginaw, MI
Saginaw, MI
Saginaw, MI
Chesaning, MI
Saginaw, MI

St. Clare Sisters • 26W171 Roosevelt Road, PO Box 667 • Wheaton, Illinois 60187

Web: <http://srsclare.com> • Facebook: [SistersofStClare](#)

Please remember us in your charitable giving.

You are not alone
WE ARE PRAYING WITH AND FOR YOU.