Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Religious Life



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I recently attended the funeral of a Sister of Mercy whom I did not know. The funeral was beautiful, with at least 50 members of her family in attendance. She was 90 and the last of several brothers and sisters to die. It was obvious, by the tears of her family members from young to old, the impact that she had on so many of them. I started to cry during the Mass, and it was because after seeing her family and those in attendance, I started to think about the impact each of us has on others.

The night before, I had attended via Zoom the sharing of memories of this Mercy sister. The Sisters of Mercy have a tradition of doing this when a sister dies. Those memories are always so beautiful. Everyone who tells a story has a different one, a different perspective on the person.

In the days following the funeral, I began to reflect on the impact my life has had on others. I was still thinking about the impact the sister had had on her family. My first try at reflecting didn't yield any big thing I have done that has made a difference. I tried to reflect again, as I was sure there had to be something that I had done that had mattered.

I realized I was going about it the wrong way. I was looking for one big thing, the thing that others will say about me at my funeral.

As I reflected, I remembered the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albolm. This book introduces the character to five people they had somehow crossed paths with during their lifetime. The presence of the person who had died changed the path of the person in significant ways. Sometimes it was a very brief meeting, and the person who had just died had no idea the impact they made.

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I changed my reflection, and what I discovered was a long list of ways I have helped others. I reflected on times I listened to others when they were struggling, jumped in and offered to do something when no one else emerged, showed up and offered support in difficult times. I began to think about my life as a collection of good works, the times I have used the gifts God has given me to help others.

I then started to think about the times others helped me — times when small, seemingly insignificant moments mattered to me, acts of kindness from friends,

family and sometimes strangers.

As part of my ministry, I walk with those who are interested in religious life. Often, women say to me that they are looking for community. They want to be a part of something that matters, to be a part of a group of people that care about each other and that also care about God. They want to be able to clearly see where God is through the presence of others.

What I have discovered is that often, when they stop and reflect on their life, they find that community was there the whole time. People had come together to help them, and they had helped others at different times.

> Take a minute to reflect on what you have done over the past few days and the ways it has mattered to someone else.
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Sometimes, in the world of easily accessible social media, I find myself endlessly scrolling, watching reel after reel of other people's lives. I see lives that are glossy, full of fun, laughter and dancing. I sometimes find myself wanting the life of a stranger. That shiny social media life that I am sometimes in pursuit of doesn't show the inevitable moments of pain, loneliness or hardship. It doesn't show the community behind life — the people who surround us, who are important in big and small ways.

We can't forget about the people in our lives, the ones whom we might have made a huge impact on, or they on us, and didn't even know it. Worrying about how many likes we have and about how our life doesn't measure up to someone else's life on social media doesn't bring us peace and happiness.

In what seems to be one piece of bad news after another in our world, I am reminded by a recent funeral that every life matters. What we do every day — the small insignificant things that seem like nothing — matters to somebody. We all have a responsibility to be community with those around us.

Take a minute to reflect on what you have done over the past few days and the ways it has mattered to someone else. I think you will find, like I did, that using the gifts given to you by God every day helps to make the community around you

better. These acts can change lives and be love and hope in a world that is greatly in need of what we have to offer. We don't need to wait until our funeral to realize the impact our presence has every day on those around us.

In the words of an Irish proverb: "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."