

Remembering Arleen

Delores Leckey's words from the Arlington Memorial Service

There's something so right about remembering Arleen Hynes in this sacred space, this church which has for so long emphasized in different ways the importance of the threshold. Our Lady Queen; of Peace has always reminded people that the church doors open outward, and beyond the threshold is a world in need of care and compassion.

Arleen led so many of us across that threshold, a mentor to those of us trying to make sense of a church changing in the wake of the Council, a world changing in the wake of the civil rights movement and the peace movement, our ideas of women's role changing in all arenas.

One day in the early sixties, before the charismatic movement, Arleen suggested that a few of us mothers (and we were mothers of young children) get together to pray. A prayer group which we would lead ourselves. Not a priest in sight. This was pretty heady stuff for young women reared in the traditional Catholic way on the east coast of North America. We came to realize the mid-west enjoyed a larger realm of freedom. And so we gathered on Pershing Drive and one thing led to another. Before long the group grew and we figured out how to organize ourselves taking turns caring for the children while the rest gloried in an hour and a half of quiet, meditation, prayer and sharing. One day when people were excitedly talking about the gifts of the spirit they heard were being poured out in prayer groups around the nation, Arleen was heard to say that she and others had worked so long and hard to bring about the vernacular in the liturgy - English in our case - she wasn't about to throw that over for speaking in tongues.

Grounded in the wisdom St. Benedict, the experience of being the mother of ten, the deepest respect for the intellectual life and a vision of the artistic life - we all benefitted from her on-going discovery of the mysteries of life, of God. She brought together common sense and a sense of adventure.

One day I met her outside of what used to pass for a shopping Mall - the old Kann's Dept. store, now the site of George Mason University. I was devastated because my husband and I figured out that the new Montessori pre-school which was about to open in Northern Virginia, would be too expensive for us to send our oldest child. Arleen took both my hands in hers and said, "Dear. You don't really think that the good God would let everything ride on whether or not your daughter attends the Montessori school, do you?" And with that simple question I relaxed.

Entering the Hynes home on Pershing Drive was like visiting an art gallery, only richer. Art pieces produced by her children - especially Hilary - mingled with the works of Minnesotans and others. Everything, from furniture to food had an aura of the creative life about it. Even death. When Emerson died and Arleen and her twin lined the coffin with Irish linen themselves, it seemed so right. She brought that creativity to St. Elizabeth's, and to the work of poetry therapy. When she called on Rhoda and Bill Nary, and Joe and Midge Wholey and the Leckeyes to join her in the study of Carl Jung - it seemed right. That little group grew into the AMDG group, named for Arleen after she entered the convent - **The Arleen Memorial Discussion Group**-- although Tom always held that its second meaning was the Jesuit motto - For the Greater Glory

of God.

In the late 80s I had the opportunity to interview Arleen at length, in Minnesota, for what I thought would be a twin biography of Arleen and the Carmelite poet Jessica Powers. Here's a little of what I found out: I saw that their home near St. John's Abbey - the little house - had corner windows. All the corners were windows so that Arleen would always have nature in her line of vision. I noticed that her room in the convent had the bed facing the window - for the same reason. She also had propped on top of a book case an open book about Persian carpets. I inquired about this and she said, I've always wanted to learn more about this particular art form so I'm reading the book when I floss my teeth. I was reminded of the time her back went out and she had a number of exercises to do each day. It was then that she got into the practice of The Jesus Prayer. Every moment counted for her.



When I asked her if she knew about the poet Jessica Powers - she recited the poem, *To Live In the Spirit*. I'm going to close with a few lines from that poem.

Note added (since the poem was not included)

Leckey, Delores R. *Winter Music: A Life of Jessica Powers: Poet, nun, woman of the 20th Century*; Sheed and Ward, 1992.

Photo of Agnes Jessica Powers, St. Miriam of the Holy Spirit, born in Mauston, Wisconsin, 1905, died 1988