REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER ALICE DOWER
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We come together this evening to remember our much-loved Sister Alice Dower. We offer sympathy to our Presentation family, particularly Alice's sister Mary, her brother-in-law, George, her sister-in-law, Shirley, her nieces, nephews, grand and great grand nieces and nephews. In having had Alice so long in your lives, it is hard to imagine life without her physical presence.

Alice Dower began life on 19th October 1929 in Conche, Newfoundland. She was the first child of Elizabeth Woodford and Ronald Dower. 4 more siblings were to follow, Mary, Bride, Liz and their only brother Ron. Alice joined our Presentation Congregation on 4th September 1950, which amounts to 76 years as a Presentation Sister. A lifetime of commitment and service!

Mary Oliver, a renowned American Poet, and a very favourite author of Alice's, wrote in one of her poems:

to live in this world

you must be able

to do three things:

to love what is mortal;

to hold it

against your bones knowing

your own life depends on it;

and, when the time comes to let it go,

to let it go."

This to me sums up Alice's life and dying. She loved all of creation, she held everything to her heart, literally and metaphorically, and when her time came, she let go and moved easily into her new life in her new Universe.

Among many things, Alice was first and foremost a teacher. She taught in St. Mary's, St. Catherine's, Holy Heart, Assumption, Stephenville, Avondale, Mary Queen of the World, Harbour Breton, Davis Inlet, Plate Cove, and spent many more years presenting Pastoral Programmes in Shoal Harbour, Clarenville, Virginia Water. In Virginia Water, here in St. John's, being part of the Retreat Team, she was a light on the whole subject of the Cosmos and the New Story, Creation and care of the Earth.

Alice was very much on fire with the Care of the Earth and the story of the Cosmos and was constantly hungry to learn more and more. She never had enough. Every conversation finished up in a conversation on Creation in the broad sense of that word. I learned so much from her and was always so pleased to listen and know that what she spoke came directly from her heart. Alice was one who never missed an opportunity to spread the good news of the beauty of creation. She could have had a signature tune:

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself what a wonderful world
I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

And Alice was grateful for this wonderful world.

We all know that Alice was not shy in making her opinion known! How many of us chatting with Alice would say something and the answer would come immediately.....I don't agree with that.... this is how it should be! She certainly

impacted many lives which is obvious in the condolences written on her obituary. To quote two of them.....

She was never judgemental but would not shy away from giving her opinion.

She was our advocate and our voice for equality and she stood by us.

Alice was one of a kind.

Only last Friday when I visited her.... she knew she had not long left in this world.... she asked me for the minutes of the meeting. WE had had a meeting with the Motherhouse Sisters the Monday before. Alice, understandably was not present at that meeting but was interested in what was happening within the Congregation. I told her we had the minutes ready and would send them around one of these days. I think she does not need those minutes now.... she has all the information and having that I know she will direct us in the right path!

Since Alice died a continuous refrain has been going through my mind. In the Gospel of Easter, some of the disciples were standing in an utterly mindless stance when an Angel appeared and asked: "why are you standing looking into the empty tomb.... He is not here.... He is risen". Alice is not here.... Alice is risen. I am inclined to smile as knowing Alice I can imagine her waltzing in awe to the beat of her new drum into her new life.

What a wonderful life! 76 years of Presentation commitment, dedication to the dream of Nano Nagle, ministering to many near and far. In the past couple of months, as her health declined, Alice showed great courage and resignation. I thought Alice being Alice would kick up a row with God..." don't tell me when to go...I will go when I am ready" ...but I was wrong! Alice knew for a while back she was dying, resigned herself very peacefully to her demise, and handed over to God. She got the great gift of peace. No struggle...just peace.

Alice was in tune with the words of the author of the Book of Jeremiah.... a reading which will be used at her Mass tomorrow....."I know the plans I have in mind for you.... plans for your welfare and not harm, plans for a future filled

with hope". Alice was in touch very much with these words, she was a woman of prayer and trust. She trusted the God whom she loved. Hope and Peace accompanied her in her last days.

Alice we bless you and thank you for the privilege of walking with you in community and ministry. Thank you for the gems of lessons you have taught us. Sing and dance now Alice as you live your new life. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of HER hand.