

Good morning!

Thank you, everyone, for gathering yesterday and today to help us celebrate the life of Sister Theresa Van Bourgondien. I am here with my brother Jim, representing our very large family who all loved her dearly. We want to thank you all for your kindness and compassion during this difficult time. We are all grateful to Sister Mary Lou and all the staff, especially the nurses who help care for Thessy.

Thessy was born in Holland and came to the United States at age 10. She excelled in school and received her many degrees in biology and microbiology. She earned her bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees and then began a teaching career to students of all different levels. Her passion was for lifelong learning and teaching. Thessy spoke three languages-English, Dutch and German.

Many of the sisters that we met yesterday described Thessy as brilliant, humble, kind, and devoted. You are all so right!!! She was all of that and more. Thessy was an artist and a lover of nature. She would go on hikes through the woods, in parks, and along the Allegany River to find that special spot in nature. Many times, she would just sit and enjoy, and other times she would take out her watercolors and begin to draw. My family has enjoyed for years all her homemade birthday cards, and pictures and it was so wonderful to see many of her pictures on the walls of the St. Elizabeth Motherhouse.

Thank you, everyone, for coming today and celebrating our cousin Thessy's life. I know Thessy was loved dearly in our family and we will truly miss her. May God bless you all and thank you for your kindness and allowing Thessy to be a part of your family here at the St. Elizabeth Motherhouse.

Barbara Van Bourgondien

Therese's Cousin