



BECAUSE *we are* CATHOLIC

Little Sisters of the Poor Volunteer Making Impact After Witnessing Dying Friend Surrounded by Love

Since 1869 when the Little Sisters of the Poor arrived in Baltimore, an estimated 15,000 elderly men and women of all backgrounds and with limited financial means have found a home. It was compassion for a friend that got Pam Perc to the Little Sisters, but it was the way that friend was treated, while on her death bed, that keeps Perc coming back.

"Our mission is to care for the elderly poor. Each person is a valuable person and needs to be respected as such," said Sister Lawrence Mary, Little Sisters volunteer coordinator. "Our role as Little Sisters is to give this respect, this dignity to each of our residents and hopefully by seeing what we do, other people will get the light and want to do the same thing."

Pam Perc is the definition of what the Little Sisters envision. In the summer of 2013, while looking after a relative of a friend, Perc met Marie, a 90-year-old woman living on her own but without immediate family around.

"I got to know Marie because I was visiting Dorothy," Perc said. "When Dorothy went to an assisted living home, I gave my phone number to Marie. She would call every day. I would take her to doctor appointments and grocery shopping. We got to be very close."

So close that when it became apparent Marie needed assisted living, it was Perc who found the Little Sisters.

"I knew about them because they would come every year to my church, St. Michael on Wolfe Street," explained Perc, who graduated from Seton High School. "She and I took a tour and filled out all the paperwork but unfortunately they didn't have a room for her at that time. That was a Thursday. I went home and prayed that night and asked the Lord to help. I knew Marie needed to be there. Friday morning, I got a call from the admissions person who said the



After witnessing the compassion her friend received from the Little Sisters of The Poor, Pam Perc (left) has become a fixture at the Catonsville home for the elderly poor, playing and singing for residents like Regina (right).

lady who was taking the room they showed us changed her mind. You talk about an answer to a prayer."

Marie spent only three months at Little Sisters but Perc was left with a lasting impression on the day her friend passed in August 2014 that changed her life.

"I knew she was dying, but it was beautiful. The beauty of everyone coming to see her," Perc said. "The sisters praying for Marie and being there for her. That is what made me change my volunteering to Little Sisters. The way they treated Marie, I was committing to this place."

"This all happened because Pam had the heart to see someone in need and to do something about it," Sister Lawrence Mary added. "And she continues to make an impact."

Perc spends at least one day a week at Little Sisters and has a regular spot on the activities calendar, playing guitar and singing for the residents. Singing, playing, and listening to music has been proven to help seniors improve and maintain their health, as well as help them recall memories and fight anxiety and depression. Not only are there numerous physical, mental and emotional benefits, but studies have shown that the benefits continue long after the music stops playing.

"I get more benefit out of it than I give," Perc concluded. "There are so many people who can't communicate but when I play, I see them moving their feet to the music. They are hearing it and responding to it. I can't explain how that makes me feel as both a musician and a human being, but I love it."

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MARYLAND SERVES AND ADVOCATES FOR THE POOR, VULNERABLE AND THOSE IN NEED NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE CATHOLIC, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE CATHOLIC.