

# Mercy in Action in The International Misericordia Family

*Denise Tessier*



## Acceptance opens new horizons ... and the unexpected of God happens.

In the upcoming newsletters of the International Misericordia Family, we will be presenting various testimonials that demonstrate "Mercy in Action."

Since the theme for the March Newsletter is *acceptance* we want to present a story that illustrates how the acceptance lived by a woman going through a very difficult situation was transformed into an unimaginable experience of Love, thanks to the actions of persons touched to their core by the God of Mercy.

### **\*Mom, Marriage, and Mercy's Majestic Memory**

For most, Mercy means forgiving a trespass, and that is definitely part of Mercy. However, Mercy's hand reaches farther and deeper than simple forgiveness. For example, another definition for Mercy is having compassion and loving-kindness toward others *when it is in our hands to do so*. A sterling example of this definition was displayed by the Misericordia Community Hospital intensive care unit's (ICU) staff in Edmonton.

### **A critically ill mother's dream is shattered**

All loving families have dreams. Sixty-year-old Mrs. S. and her daughter were no different. Although Mom suffered from multiple sclerosis, she expected to attend her daughter's wedding and help choose her wedding dress. However, life's unexpected circumstances sometimes get in the way.

While on a cruise in Mexico, Mrs. S. had a heart attack and required an emergency coronary artery bypass. The surgery was the beginning of the landslide to more serious health issues. Several post-surgical complications occurred, including an infection in the breastbone. Mrs. S. became very weak and couldn't breathe without a ventilator. Then she developed kidney failure and needed dialysis; multiple pneumonias followed. After a few weeks in Mexico, she was transferred to an Edmonton hospital where they tried to

enable her to breathe independently. Because it would be a long, difficult process, the patient was transferred to the Misericordia Community Hospital ICU where the healthcare professionals are recognized for their creative, aggressive, sometimes non-traditional approaches in weaning people from ventilators.

Despite attempts with aggressive rehabilitation and physiotherapy by the hospital professionals, the patient remained incredibly weak. It became increasingly clear that breathing without a respirator and the dream of going home, gaining strength, attending the wedding, and choosing the wedding dress with her daughter would be only that--a dream.

### **Mrs. S. makes two requests**

After consulting with staff, her husband, and other professionals, Mrs. S. instructed the hospital not to resuscitate her. She did not want to live in a long-term care facility on a ventilator. Therefore, when the dialysis and healthcare treatment ended, death would be imminent.

But Mrs. S. had another request: Could the hospital staff facilitate her dream by allowing her to help choose the dress and taking pictures in the hospital? The staff said yes immediately. However, organizing this type of activity in a hospital setting is complicated.

The patient was in isolation. All who entered her room had to wear gowns, gloves, and masks. Wedding dresses that flowed to the ground were not part of hospital or ICU attire. The nurses lined the floors with blankets before the daughter began the fashion show.

### **The Misericordia Community Hospital conveys the majesty of Mercy**

At the arranged time the daughter arrived at the hospital with the wedding dresses. The dresses were not only to be shown but also worn by the bride-to-be in full makeup and styled hair. The daughter modelled two dresses and got Mom provided her opinion of which dress should be chosen for the wedding. For mother and daughter, this was an incredibly emotional moment. Mrs. S. selected the same dress her daughter would have chosen herself. Then came the picture-taking. Although Mrs. S. was in full hospital garb, on the ventilator, and surrounded by monitors and tubes, pictures were taken as if this were a routine wedding day.

A couple of days later, the dialysis was stopped. Mrs. S. and her husband reminisced about the past. Her church family sang and played music that she enjoyed while the hospital kept her comfortable and relatively pain-free. Eventually Mrs. S. became drowsy, her heart stopped, and she passed away peacefully. She truly experienced what the ICU healthcare staff call “death with dignity.”

## Providing more than “death with dignity”

One of the Misericordia Community Hospital’s missions is to ensure that patients “die with dignity.” Because of the circumstances surrounding the event, “death with dignity” went a step further. A synonym for *dignity* is *majesty*. The ICU’s personnel enabled Mrs. S. to die not only with *dignity* but also with *majesty*. And the spontaneous yes to the request could only be made because Mercy’s DNA had become part of Dr. Mark Heule (Director of Critical Care), Kim Scherr (Nurse Practitioner), Michelle Campbell (Respiratory Therapist), their staff, and the hospital’s personnel.

Few of us will have the opportunity to show Mercy under life-and-death circumstances and with such a far-reaching, lifelong impact on others. But in a sometimes busy world, we have many opportunities to show Mercy, compassion, and loving-kindness. And Mercy always brings *dignity* and *majesty* to the recipient.

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Based on an original article found at [www.thevitalbeat.ca](http://www.thevitalbeat.ca) by Suzanne Gordon.

For the full story: <https://www.thevitalbeat.ca/news/wedding-wish-granted-in-icu/>.