

Shadows

Bring Remembrance

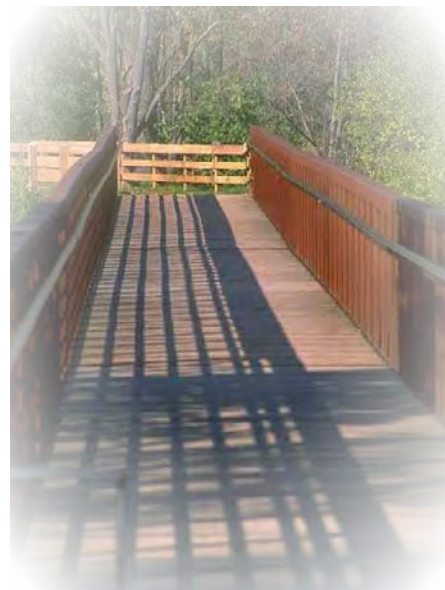
Have you noticed that this is the season of the long shadows? I was at the little park by the river the other evening and as I walked along, I noticed how long my shadow was. The sun is low in the sky, and the lower it gets, the shadow seems to grow longer. [All Saints Day](#) and [All Souls Day](#) is the church's time of long shadows. Memory reaches out into the past and brings out shadows of people who have gone before but have left their mark. In my river side walk, two specific people came to mind. These were not people who were prominent in my life, but still they left a mark on my memory.

Sister Mary Juliana was a [Servite Sister](#) who served most of her religious life in the convent kitchen. I met her during the years I worked for and with the Servite Sisters in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. In one corner of her rather large kitchen, she had her little cloister or prayer space. While things were cooking or between meals, it was not uncommon to find her there. Her friends were well-worn prayer

books and rosaries. Her brother was a monk at [Saint Norbert Abbey](#) and a college chemistry professor. I think she was proud of him because she would talk about him often enough. Her background and education were quite common, yet she had extraordinary insights, especially when it came to her spiritual life. I truly enjoyed being with her and talking to her, but most of all listening to her. Her comments on life flowed from a spirit within her, from the depth of her soul.

I thought her to be a saint, though I never expect her to be canonized. She is one of those long shadows that gently reaches out and touches everything and everyone in its path. The low sun in the sky can also be troublesome because it can blind you. Not so the shadow that so easily wraps you in its embrace and you don't even know it. But you've been touched. For me, this was an encounter with holiness, and Sister Mary Juliana is part of a great communion of saints we celebrate on All Saints Day.

The other person is my cousin, Tommy. He died this past year (2008) and circumstances prevented me from getting to his funeral, and I still feel guilty. Tommy was, even as we were kids growing up, the constant risk-taker. He seemed to live



always at the edge — hard to get a hold of, but still when something happened, he knew about it and came. Christmas was his usual time for reentry and always sort of with a bang. I doubt that church played a big part in his life, but he had some fundamental faith that sparkled at Christmas or funerals. Once he remarked to me, "hey cuz, I'm your proof for purgatory, I live in it; it's my way to heaven." Tommy represents a different awareness of God in his life than Sister Mary Juliana. Perhaps, his awareness is more commonplace and might very well be labeled "The Poor Souls."

Once again the long shadow spreads itself across life with a gentle faith that the many mansions of the Father's house really means that there is room for Tommy. As Tommy so well put it, "it's my way to heaven," so that even on the edge of life, God is present. Honor the souls of your beloved dead. Pray to the saints you've known in this life. What long shadows come to mind this All Saints Day?

