

# A Christmas Journey

Dear

Angela Surs &  
Pamela Morrison

**“May the memories come to you softly, as softly as a breath.”**

*I awoke the morning of Christmas Eve to those beautifully sorrowful words of Andrew Dreschel in the Hamilton Spectator. Our family was suffering through a similar, but at that moment, unfinished story.*

*My mum had struggled valiantly with Parkinson’s disease, for a while in her own home and finally at St. Joseph’s Villa in Dundas. Hers, and therefore ours, was a journey filled with twists and turns that often left us trembling with tears as well as laughter. It was a journey that demanded such courage and strength. For all who have watched helplessly as a loved one wages war against a tireless enemy, you know the emotional and physical cost to everyone.*

*This story is not only about the passing of a woman we loved, but about the immense kindness and care that we encountered at the nursing home.*

*From the first weeks, to her last moments on that Christmas day, everyone she came to know enriched her life in immeasurable ways. The Villa became a home and a haven. Smiles and gentle touches were constant reminders of peace, hope and love.*

*As the disease tightened its grip on her life and she struggled daily with life and death choices, her dear friends at the Villa closed the circle around her and me. Every time I visited, I saw on the faces of everyone I met, from reception to health care staff, from the dining room to administration, their commitment to help and support us.*

*At a low point, when Mum felt she couldn’t keep fighting, we decided to gather and celebrate Christmas early. I will never forget that the hairdresser came in on Sunday to do her hair; that someone painted her nails; that the staff worked to ensure that it would be a special party.*

*continued on back*

## St. Joseph’s Villa Foundation A Christmas Journey

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- I wish to remain anonymous
- In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_
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Please mail cheques payable to:  
**St. Joseph’s Villa Foundation**  
56 Governor’s Road, Dundas, Ontario L9H 5G7  
905-627-9011 Fax: 905-627-8978  
[www.sjv.on.ca](http://www.sjv.on.ca)  
See reverse for monthly giving option

*As Christmas drew closer, I realized that she wasn't going to rally again as she had so many times in the past year. I was so afraid and yet angry that she might die on Christmas Day. I was so afraid that forever it would be marked with such sadness. She had waited and struggled for so long. Couldn't she wait one more day?*

*Christmas Eve, filled with tortuous, anxious moments, passed slowly. She was unresponsive and in sharp decline. They called me to come. We sat with her and waited and then we went home to the life that continued beyond illness and death.*

*On Christmas morning, after I called and learned that her condition had not changed, we continued with our usual Christmas customs of presents and breakfast. She wasn't there. I went to see her that afternoon. As I waited with her, we were enveloped by the love of all at the Villa who knew her and cared for her. It was safe and comforting. She breathed, but she didn't wake. They told me that she had woken that morning and announced, "It's Christmas! When will my family be coming?" Later, we gathered for dinner at my brother's, a short distance away. As the turkey was being taken out of the oven, I answered the phone and received the message. My brother found me, stopped me from walking aimlessly and hugged me with the power of loss and grief.*

*That was Mum's gift to our family. It was all she had to give and, in the end, the only gift that mattered. If she had passed away any other day, at any other time, we wouldn't have been together, my brother and I. She always told me, "Things will work out." As I fearfully anticipated her death, I never could have imagined that Christmas Day, at dinner, in my brother's house, was the right time, the best time. I went to her one last time. Even now as I write the words, it's a surprise, a shock. We shared Christmas dinner as a family that night and Mum was right there with us, just where she wanted to be. It was so sad and yet so wonderful.*

*The loss of my mother is enormous. There are so many memories of this time. Always, I will think of the Villa staff as the angels who watched over her and the caregivers of our hearts. In the end kindness was all that mattered.*

*It's been a few years since Mum passed away. I write to you today because, this Christmas more than ever, St. Joseph's Villa is in need of angels too – as they struggle to raise enough funds to pay for the new facility, to complete the renovations and to ensure they continue to provide the same quality care that my mum received and your loved ones deserve. Now is the time for us to be caregivers.*

*Please become one of our Christmas Angels this year. Every gift matters, regardless of the amount. Just imagine - if we all give a gift from the heart this Christmas we can make miracles happen.*

*Angela Sirrs*

Angela Sirrs  
Daughter of Pamela Morrison

**Monthly Gifts**

I have enclosed a blank cheque marked "VOID." Please deduct my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ from my bank account on the 30th of each month.

Please charge my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my credit card each month.

Please charge my  Mastercard  Visa  Amex

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I have made provision in my will for St. Joseph's Villa Foundation

**Your privacy is important to us.**

*St. Joseph's Villa Foundation contacts its friends periodically to share news and information concerning the Villa's progress and needs by mail, phone or e-mail.*

Please check this box if you do not wish to receive updates.

Please exclude my name from lists celebrating donors by gift level.

 **St. Joseph's Villa Foundation C.A.R.E.**  
*Committed to Activities that Raise funds to Enhance the quality of life for seniors.*