

## God Loves You

by Christine Callahan

Theresa Mary Frances would have her devotional singing lessons cut short today. "It will be for a greater good!" she reasoned aloud. At the allotted time, she marched out of the conservatory in a huff.

Theresa Mary Frances was so determined forging along that she almost forgot to stop for a gift. Not just any trinket, she thought, "Something...fresh! No, no, homemade or maybe passed down! Oh why hadn't I planned better? I could have made a lovely card or cut out inspirational quotes from magazines or even finish decoupageing that old vase! Fresh it is then." When the dialog in her mind dwindled, she noticed the boutique on the corner. She crinkled her disapproving nose at the mediocre lilies-of-the-valley. She sighed and proclaimed, "Wilted, wilted - not for dear Sister Jeanne Marie Rose. Oh God love her, poor soul, laying up there, all beeping and a buzzing."

Theresa Mary Frances finally decided on a shiny metallic helium balloon. On the front side, a cartoon creature grimaced. On the reverse, pink curly q letters,

ornate like birthday cake icing, spelled out "God Loves You".

The stench of ammonia hit Theresa Mary Frances as she entered the Saint Francis of Assisi infirmary. She mumbled encouraging words to herself waiting for the elevator. As she walked through the North Wing, the squeak of her loafers and the voices in her head were drowned out. In its place, the drone of gurgling electronic pumps lamented a disjointed song. From the doorway she saw slices of harsh sunlight dissecting the room into jagged triangles. A manila curtain covered half of Sister Barbara Jeanne Marie Rose's sleeping body. She was fastened to a jumble of technicolor wires. They converged into a tangled rainbow mass at the foot of crisp, starched sheets. Amber and maroon plastic tubes coiled in and out of Sister Jeanne Marie Rose's nostrils and lips. Holy places were hooked up to sagging bags on wheels.

In order to behold Sister Jeanne Marie Rose's predicament, Theresa Mary Frances cleared off a lump of dirty towels from a neighboring green vinyl chair. She stared for a while, unaware that she had been holding her breath. Theresa Mary Frances then began to inspect the

clutter on the adjacent nightstand. There was no evidence of prior visitors among the plastic straws, tissues, water cups and unopened juice containers. The wave of calmness subsided as she spotted Father Davey's humble mass card taped to the yellowing wall. Her second-guessing along with reassuring advice returned. Theresa Mary Frances meticulously tied the wispy crimson ribbon to the chilly metal valve of the oxygen tank. Now the joy could be seen directly over Sister Jeanne Marie Rose's delicately sleeping head.

Joyce, the orderly leaped forward and hollered, "Ma'am, you're gonna blow up your loved one! Helium and oxygen aren't the perfect marriage!" She rushed over and untied the bow. "See here, I just punched in and I ain't gonna lose someone this early in my shift!"

Theresa Mary Frances read the icing cake message as it floated up to the ceiling vent. She leaned over and whispered in the Sister's drowsy ear, "You see that, the Lord's glory is shinning down on you. You are a blessed child of God, Sister Jeanne Marie Rose."