

## **Sandra Patenaude**

**Sandra Patenaude, is a life-long member of Saint Marguerite d'Youville Parish in Dracut, Massachusetts; she frequently worships with the Saint Joseph the Worker faith community in nearby Lowell. As a devout Catholic, she sees it as her responsibility to help those who are disadvantaged and she does so sometimes even at the expense of her own well-being. She manages this, all the while single-handedly providing for her family through her work as a model shop employee at Raytheon corporation. Even in the workplace, she manages to touch the lives of those around her - because selfless service to others regardless of creed is ingrained in her character. Saint Teresa of Calcutta's philosophy of "small actions with big love" comes to mind as representative of Sandra's M.O.**

**Before spending her life in service to her family and employment, Sandra Patenaude was already working to better the lives of those less fortunate. As a twenty-year-old woman, she led multiple Catholic youth groups whose aim was to give under-privileged young adults the opportunity to celebrate their First Communion and Confirmation. One episode perhaps best exemplifies her character: when beginning her duties as the lead instructor for one of the youth groups, the former instructor, another woman of faith, stopped her in the hall. She handed her a list of names and asserted that the children on that list were "problematic" and, as such, were not worthy of much attention. Astounded by the woman's lack of compassion, Sandra calmly accepted the list and bid the former instructor farewell. Over the course of her leadership, she made it a point to reach out to those very children, showing them respect and generosity, and giving them important responsibilities in the program. When the holidays arrived, she encouraged the children to laugh and play, something which was unfortunately foreign to them, and even organized parties for the children. At the conclusion of her instruction time, those "problematic" children were reborn as bright young adults who, after celebrating their Confirmation, went on to lead fulfilling lives. This story is a kind of parable of what it means to be a true person of faith, respect, and integrity; those who hide behind faith to appear righteous often neglect to recognize those small actions that make all the difference. Sandra Patenaude has mastered that virtue through her repeated actions of love and compassion.**

**Over the course of her life, Sandra has partaken in many forms of service, most of which cannot be described here in proper detail. She has crafted gift baskets for children during the Christmas season so that they may also experience the love and warmth of Christ. Undeterred by the danger, she has set foot into correctional facilities, determined to introduce the faith to men seeking guidance and repentance. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, she traveled to the foreign land of India, where she helped the poor and volunteered at the world-renowned Mother Teresa Home for the Dying. These more visible outreaches do not include the smaller acts of kindness that she almost instinctively carries out daily. One time, Sandra was driving when she noticed a homeless man on the side of the road. Surrounding him was the scorn of many: the man had not bathed and, ill, he had soiled himself. Alone and without help, this man had practically resigned himself certain death, since it seemed that the world would rather bury him than recognize his humanity. Without hesitation and seeing through the injustice, she approached the man and, consoling him, proceeded to give him the last of her money. While retreating to her car, one of the condemners yelled "Hey! You know he's is just going to spend your money on booze! Why do you bother?" Indignant, she responded "What does it matter to me what he spends it on? If it's even possible that he can put it to better use than I can, then so be it!" Upon entering her car, she found that, miraculously, the exact sum of money that she had given to the man was back in her pocket. God rewards those who strive to help those in need, no matter the person, situation, or consequences. Sandra Patenaude has no inhibitions about helping those in need.**

**Sandra Patenaude's actions, including many that were not discussed here, were performed while painstakingly providing for her family and raising her child to be just as righteous, selfless, and compassionate—so that through her sacrifice, the torch of service to one's neighbor could continue to light the world on fire. Sandra Patenaude epitomizes Saint Joseph's creed of resolute action demonstrating strong faith, love, and acceptance of God's will under challenging and dangerous circumstances.**