

Remembering Sister Eileen Shaughnessy

Oct. 1, 1932 - Aug. 14, 2009



To remember this wonderful religious woman, Eileen Shaughnessy, properly, would not only take dozens and dozens of pages. It would take dozens of days.

Of course, we don't have dozens of days, but let us at least try to give her some justice this evening.

First of all, she was born into a warm and happy Irish family. Her father, Alfred James Shaughnessy from Detroit, married Jean Bernadette McLean from Sault Ste. Marie. They had six lively children – two boys, Gerald and James, and four girls, Patricia, Suzanne, Marion and Eileen. Of the six, James, Marion and now Eileen have made their journey to heaven to be with their parents. Typical of Eileen, she was planning this week to travel to Florida to help care for her sister Patricia who is very ill.

Being such a typical Irish family, we presume that Eileen's parents blessed her decision to enter religious life. Although Eileen had gone to grade school at St. Bridgid's in Detroit, her high school years were spent at Immaculata where she met the IHMs and decided to enter our congregation. So on Aug. 21, 1950, Eileen walked through our front door and began a life of deep prayer and enthusiastic education.

Before beginning her teaching career, she completed a college degree at Marygrove and soon after this entered the master's program at Wayne State where she earned her master's degree in elementary education.

Eileen's teaching career was in elementary education and spanned 23 years. She taught in Monroe, Detroit, Port Huron, Fenton and Bloomfield Hills. In that time she taught grades 1 through 6 – loving every one of them. She was an excellent teacher and in 1981-82 she also served on a team from the Diocese of Lansing in a project called the "*National Textbook Evaluation*." This was inaugurated by the National Conference of Diocesan Directors.

As much as Eileen loved teaching, her heart gravitated toward the needs of the parish and neighborhood *communities*. This pull of her heart took her for 32 years into pastoral ministry where she spent the rest of her life.

During these years several things stand out in what Eileen said about her ministry. They were about *peace & justice*, about the *faith community*, about *growing together*.

In Eileen's words, "We are called to bring peace and justice to our areas. We must try to enable all people to experience love and peace." These words appear over and over in her writings.

Also, her understanding of parish life was that it was a community of believers working together to live the gospel message. She said "Together we look for the light and love in our faith community." In one section of her writings she outlined her ministry as follows:

My ministry as Pastoral Associate enables me to experience the Faithlife of people in the parish.

My ministry to young families at the time of Baptism gives me a sense of wonder and hope.

As I walk the faith journey with RCLA my personal and communal faith is deeply enriched by these people seeking to know the Lord Jesus.

And lastly, as I visit with those in the hospital or at home I appreciate the deep faith of the elderly. I have had the privilege of being with persons at the time of death that has strengthened and made real the sense of God's presence in our lives.

In addition to her great commitment to ministry, Eileen had outstanding qualities. She was decisive. So much so, that she couldn't abide meetings that were all words and no action. If a meeting started to stall, she'd be sure to say "Hey, let's get on with it."

She loved parties, especially if a glass of wine was part of the celebrating. You could be sure that she would bring a bottle of wine to a party.

She loved helping people. If you needed something, she'd find a way to get it for you. She always followed through with whatever she promised.

She was generous with both her time and her possessions.

Eileen was a wonderful friend. If you were her friend, it would be for life. You couldn't have a better friend.

And lastly, Eileen was punctual. She was always on time. This was such a joke that the women who were waiting for her on the day she died thought that she was late. They were planning on how they were going to tease her about this.

Little did they know that she was late for them

...Because she was ON TIME for God.

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