



Eulogy of Sister Eileen E. Fuchs, BVM
Caritas Studio, Sept. 3, 2020

Good morning. It is good to celebrate together the life of our Sister Eileen E. Fuchs. I am speaking to you from Two Spiders Lodge in Hayward, Wisconsin—a place Eileen loved and at which she enjoyed memorable times with her March Madness friends.

Eileen English Fuchs was born on July 31, 1959, in St. Louis to William and Eileen (Hannifin), Fuchs. She joined brothers Dan and Bill and sisters Betsy and Terry. Younger sister Cece completed the family. Her father worked as an office manager and her mother as a medical secretary.

Eileen attended Little Flower Elementary School in Richmond Heights, Mo., and graduated from Nerinx Hall High School, a college preparatory school for young women in Webster Groves, also in Missouri. She worked as a laboratory clerk at St. John's Mercy Medical Center in St. Louis from her senior year in high school through college. In 1981, she completed a bachelor's degree with a biology major and chemistry minor at Quincy College in Illinois. A one-year internship at St. John's Mercy School of Medical Technology completed a bachelor's degree in medical technology. Her internship turned into a fulltime job as a medical technologist at St. John's, where she remained for 14 years.

Eileen entered the BVM congregation on Aug. 27, 1995, and was received on Sept. 14, 1996. "I met the BVMs through Lou Anglin who was teaching my nieces and nephew at the parish school where I belonged," she shared. "I was searching for something more and religious life seemed to fill the gap."

During formation she often wrote about her experience of community. "I consider myself blessed to have lived with and learned from beautiful women. Through our sharing . . . , I have grown tremendously as a person. [They] constantly challenge me to be a healthy, happy person. I have truly seen the unconditional love of God reflected in the BVM community." Eileen professed first vows on July 18, 1998, final vows on July 16, 2005, and lived 25 years as a BVM.

Eileen ministered as a science teacher and a tennis coach at Nerinx Hall High School for 17 years. An excellent and dedicated teacher, she deeply impacted the lives of her students. Using her dynamic sense of humor, she infused fun into learning and opened many young minds to diverse topics.

In 2005, Eileen's students, under her direction, applied for and received a grant from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to design an environmentally friendly water purifying apparatus and a cost efficient, lightweight steel structure to transport the water over rugged terrain to villages and homes in developing countries. This was the beginning of Nerinx Hall InvenTeams. The team even presented their Water Transport and Treatment Apparatus (WTTA) at the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York City. Recognizing her contributions to education, the University of Missouri honored Eileen with the 2010 Outstanding Teacher Award.

Tributes on the Nerinx Hall alumnae page referred to Eileen as "one of the coolest people I ever met," "sweet and thoughtful," "a beautiful spirit," "a kind soul," "an incredible woman," "a force," "a treasure," and "the best."

These words are evidence that Eileen's teaching went far beyond science. Her incredible support inspired students to become better people while remaining true to themselves. Her compassion, love, and joy showed students how to believe in their self-worth and in God's forgiveness and infinite love. Even when Eileen fought breast cancer, she used it as a teaching opportunity for her students. "I learned how loved I am. That was amazing . . . What matters most is that I love and that I am loved . . . I used to say a prayer every day: Lord, let me see your face in all I meet and let me be your face to all I meet. It just boils down to that." Eileen truly lived the words "Since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4: 11).

One of Eileen's goals as a teacher was to "introduce an awe of nature and of the Creator. I have observed a receptiveness to this wonderment in [students'] eyes. There is a desire to be at peace with nature and with our Creator." Eileen always ended her astronomy course by saying, "I hope you will never forget to look up at the stars and be amazed."

Encouraging an awe of nature was not limited to Eileen's students. Her emails as "the Moon lady" inspired many of us to turn our gaze upward and marvel at the beauty of the night sky and profoundly feel the presence of God.

Eileen died shortly before dusk. Within the next 12 hours, members of the BVM community reported seeing a spectacular first quarter moon, stars and planets gleaming in a perfectly clear night sky, and a burnt orange sunrise unlike any seen before. One cannot help but wonder if Eileen had a hand in these gorgeous displays.

Eileen loved her family and her BVM community and had a special affection and deep connection with the March Madness group. She enjoyed relaxing at the Spiders, but also liked traveling which exposed her to different worlds and perspectives. She made friends everywhere she went. She was so easy to talk to that people who just met her felt they had known her all their lives.

Eileen's orientation was always toward being there for others. While traveling during this pandemic, her concern for the restaurant workers inspired her to leave generous tips. She always asked how a person was doing and truly listened to the reply. She was genuine in her connections and in her outpouring of affection and always ready with a heartfelt "I love you." There was peacefulness and safety in her presence. And if the mood became too heavy, her zest for life, her crazy sense of humor, and her outrageous laugh could lighten the moment.

Eileen loved sports, especially her favorite teams, the St. Louis Cardinals and the Green Bay Packers. She would even seek out minor league baseball games to attend when traveling. After the coronavirus cancelled sporting events for months, Eileen was looking forward to the Cardinals' first game. Unfortunately it was sidelined by positive COVID-19 tests. A desperate Eileen was forced to watch the Chicago White Sox play the Detroit Tigers!

Eileen was big into texting from sharing comments with friends during a game to sending a thought for the day to March Madness. She also loved all kinds of music. Yes, Eileen was good at many things, but cooking was not one of them. Supposedly, meatloaf was the only dish she knew how to cook, but we're not sure anyone ever saw her make it?

A few years ago, Eileen discerned that it was time to serve the community in a greater capacity. She was elected as a Congregational Representative in 2018 for what was to be a two-year term. She was willing to serve, open to the challenge, and showed great love, care, and concern for her sisters. Recently, she graciously agreed to remain in this position and serve on the Interim Council until elections, postponed by the pandemic, could be held next year. In her two years as Congregational Representative, Eileen companioned 22 sisters on their journeys home to God. Surely every one of them was there to welcome her.

Eileen, your death put us at a loss for words, but your love remains and gives us comfort. Be at peace, united with your parents and Dan and Betsy, in the loving presence of our God. Until we meet again, we promise never to forget to look up and be amazed.

