



Sharing of Memories of Eleanor Craggs, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, April 4, 2024

Pat Kennedy Jewett, Former Student

Sister Mary Eleanor has held a special place in my heart for many years. She was my principal at St. Paul High School in San Francisco and my postulant mistress at Guadalupe College in 1965. She was firm and fair, loyal, and kind. As a student and as a postulant, I did not always see her funny side until later years.

Sister Mary Eleanor treated my family and me well at every turn. As a postulant, unexpectedly, I needed to have a tumor removed from my eye. Sister sat in that waiting room at Stanford Hospital, just like my parents, never leaving. I cannot forget her dedicated devotion to her elderly mother's care. Later years, I learned she was an only child, but her selfless devotion to God still led her to enter the community.

Sister had a long life. But long or short, she certainly had an impact. I am so glad our paths crossed, and I know they will again someday. God bless Sister Mary Eleanor. Now gone but never forgotten. May she rest in peace knowing she truly made a difference and not just to me.

Jacqueline Powers Doud, Former Student and Former BVM

Eleanor made a huge and lasting impact on me. In high school she introduced me to my love of French. She was a supreme example of calm, graciousness, and equanimity. As an excellent teacher, one always thought whatever she taught was her favorite subject. She gave me very comforting advice in the face of teenage disappointment. Of course, she was a fabulous friend as a fellow BVM and throughout life. I loved and admired Eleanor.

Sister Mary Jean Ferry, BVM

I am one of Eleanor's students from Holy Family High School in Glendale, Calif. There are others here who were her students like Gwen Farry, Mary Anne Bradish, Joan Condon, Mary Jeanne Stopper. She was one of our most favorite teachers. She taught us geometry, not that she knew geometry, but they just needed a geometry teacher. She really was a French teacher. We just loved her dearly; all the students did. I am grateful for having her not only as a teacher in my life, but a dear, dear friend. I love her so much.

I asked different people for adjectives to describe Eleanor. These are a few that I heard: very kind, faithful, very independent, generous, determined, witty, at many times rather feisty. We remember Eleanor sitting in the warm sun for hours. She loved warmth. I know she was looking at the river and praying. Every single day during the summer she would be out there. When she came into Mount Carmel Bluffs, you could find her sitting by the warm fire in Gables.

Eleanor was a great lover. She would hold your hand and never let go. She especially loved her mother. She had a beautiful relationship with her mother. After school, she would go over and visit with her every day. Towards the end, she lived with her mother. After her mother died, Eleanor would continue to talk to her often. If you visited Eleanor the days before she died, you would hear her say, "Mother, mother, mother!" Finally, it came to the last time she said it. Her breathing got so calm; I think she was already with her in Heaven. Eleanor, we ask you to teach us the importance of mothers in our lives every day and on to eternity. Eleanor, you remain

with us here. Your beautiful presence surrounds us and keeps you here. Thank you for your life lived fully with so much love.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I was one of that infamous set who needed to be taught how to have some time of silence in our lives. We loved Eleanor and she loved us. That was obvious both ways. When I was coming back after a sabbatical in 1995 after the closure of St. Paul High School, I didn't know where to go. I interviewed at Holy Family in Glendale. Eleanor was on the staff there and I know she was hoping that I would take the assistant principal job there. However, my heart was in teaching. I chose to stay in the Bay area and spent twenty years at Holy Names High School in Oakland.

This morning I was with Alice Caulfield who shared this little vignette. Alice was an administrator here and there was an office for her in Marian Hall and an office in the Motherhouse. Eleanor was her assistant. She said that the most important thing Alice needed to do was be in the Motherhouse Tea Room 10:30 in the morning because that was when the sisters gathered. Alice tried to explain that that time was right in the middle of when things were happening, but never mind. Eleanor would get on the public address system and call for her if she wasn't there.

Sister Regina M. Qualls, BVM

I am one of Eleanor's first group of postulants. As Pat Kennedy Jewett said, we knew she loved us, and we loved her. I learned that she worried a lot about how she had been as a postulant mistress. She told me that she had been told to be hard on us. That was because Guadalupe was new. The fact that we didn't have water and lived in a construction zone didn't seem to be part of the picture. She was told to be hard on us so that we didn't live in the lap of luxury. She used to say, "I hope I wasn't too hard on you." "No, Eleanor, you were firm and fair." "Are you sure? Are you sure I wasn't too hard?" "No, Eleanor, you weren't too hard." Really, until that past two years, she almost always brought up that she worried about that. We all tried to assure her in various ways that we all truly, truly loved her and we knew how much she loved us. It was a privilege to be one of her postulants.

Sister Barbara Brooks, BVM

I also was one of Eleanor's postulants. As Regina just said, she was so kind and patient with us. I want to give you an example of that. Some of you already know this, so just don't listen, but to anybody who doesn't know this, it says a lot about her.

After our instructions in the morning, she would go to her office and people would lineup to ask her something. I never did that until one day. I stood in line and was very nervous about it. I did it over and over and over again for the next eight days or so. I always asked her for an aspirin. At the end of those days, she was so kind to me when she said, "Deary, are you ill?" I said, "No, Sister." She said, "Why do you need an aspirin every day?" I said, "Well, I am in charge of cleaning the postulate, dusting the shelves and watering the plant. I keep watering this begonia plant. I don't know anything about plants, but it is a begonia. It just keeps drooping so I asked around and somebody told me that if you give a plant an aspirin, it might perk up again." I kept giving it an aspirin, but it kept drooping and drooping. I said, "I'm so sorry. It isn't doing well, so I keep giving it more aspirin." She didn't look odd at me. She didn't say, "You dummy!" She was just very kind and said, "Why don't you let me take a look at that, OK?" It was just before lunch time, so we all went off to lunch. When I came back again, there was no begonia plant. She never gave any indication that this dummy didn't know how to treat a begonia plant. That's how kind and good she was. It says so much about her. I will always remember Eleanor for being so kind

Sister Frances Donnelly, BVM

Barbara doesn't touch plants in our house. I too am one of the first groups at Guadalupe. I debated about telling this story because it sounds like it's about me, but it really is very much along the same lines at the stories we have heard.

When I walked into here for the first time, Kate Hendel said to me, "It's just like going to Guadalupe at the beginning – the dust, the dirt. It was very early on, maybe fall after we had entered in July. My brother, at the time, was in the service at Fort Hood in Tacoma, Wash., and he was able to come to visit for a weekend. We had a good ole time within reason. What were we going to do on a mountaintop? There was a workroom downstairs that eventually morphed into the laundry room. It was the construction workers' workroom. There was a pay phone in there. I had what I thought was a brilliant idea. "Let's call home." My brother said, "Great idea," and gave me a dime. I and one of my classmates from The Immaculata called home and had a good ole visit with our parents. My brother said, "Hold onto the dime because then you will be able to call anytime." I thought, "Are we related or what? this is a great idea." Don't ask me what I did with the dime, but I kept it for only a few days. I don't know what got into me, maybe good old guilt, but I actually went in to see Eleanor with my dime and told her the story. As we mentioned, she could appear to be extremely stoic. There was no expression on her face whatsoever. I thought, "This is it. It's only been a couple of months, but get on that train and head east." But she said, "Alright, thank you." Done.

Months later, when my parents came to visit Guadalupe for the first time, my mom told me the story of meeting Eleanor at Mundelein College for some event. She told them the story of the dime. She told them that she thought it was the funniest thing that had ever happened. She said, "I can't get over the ingenuity and the forethought." She went on praising me for this crazy idea. My mom said Eleanor was laughing out loud as she was telling the story. The lesson for me was: How do you put all that together? How are you smart enough and wise enough, especially dealing with kids, to put together the discipline, etc.? At the same time, I always knew she loved me. I don't know how many people in this room have said that about their postulant mistress. She was very special.

Sister Margaret Mary Cosgrove, BVM

I was part of the second and last set of postulants who entered at Guadalupe. Kathy Carr was in my set. We were *not* the group to learn silence by living into it. It might have worked with Regina's group; there were more introverts in that group. We had a lot of very loud people.

There are so many memories of Guadalupe. There were five of us who were in this special math class because we, unfortunately, had taken four years of high school math. The person who taught math at Guadalupe thought we should try this experimental class called "Real Numbers." It was a very difficult class. We learned later that it was a graduate course at Stanford University. Many of us really were not that prepared for graduate math. The class always ran overtime. We had recreation right after class. Friends would come and ring the bell right outside the classroom hoping that she would let us go.

One of my fondest memories is of when we were postulants at Christmastime. We were a small group at Guadalupe. Many people in the community were not happy about our being at Guadalupe or that it existed. We found our own fun and supported each other. We loved Eleanor and Ann Marie Dolan, our novice mistress. At Christmastime when we were postulants, we were singing Christmas carols. Eleanor sang for us in French "O Holy Night." She had a gorgeous voice. She was so fluent in French. It was such a beautiful experience. It was our first Christmas away from home. She made us feel like we were at home and that all would be well.

Jackie Kresal

I was not a postulant at Guadalupe. I knew Sister Eleanor from a slightly different angle. She hired me to teach at Holy Family in Glendale, Calif., 45 years ago. When we were talking on the phone, I told her, "I'm not really sure I want to move to California." I ended up spending twenty years in California. I know her best from traveling with her. We first went to Alaska where we took a helicopter up to a glacier and we went river rafting. We took a cruise to the Caribbean and enjoyed the sunsets on the beach. We went to Maine. We went to Vermont several times because my friend had a cabin on a lake which we had a hard time getting Eleanor out of because she loved swimming. I noticed all the beautiful pictures on display. My favorite picture of Eleanor is from one Christmas that we spent in Connecticut with Helen. Eleanor had the facility to be able to fall asleep anywhere at any time. She was sitting on the couch sound asleep with her head down. Next to her, leaning up

against her is Helen's Doberman Nora whose head is on Eleanor's shoulder also sound asleep. The two of them are sitting there waiting for the next adventure. There will never be another Eleanor, and I miss her terribly.

Sister Eileen Healy, BVM

I worked in the Motherhouse when Eleanor was the assistant/secretary for Donard Collins, Floria Shannon, Carol Marie Baum and myself over a period of years. Regarding the story of the Motherhouse Tea Room, Eleanor and I used to laugh and say we had a good recess. About 10-10:15 a.m., we met in the little tearoom around the corner. In very short time, the room was full. It was the people from the north end of the building. They would hear the laughter and come down. We would have a great number of people. I said to a friend one time, "I'm just sitting around talking to people." She called it "productive listening." She put a good spin on it that it was an important part of the job.

One other thing about Eleanor. During that time, I was going back and forth to Chicago rather regularly taking people to funerals, to weddings, to all sorts of events, back and forth. It was before electronic toll passes. I would have told Eleanor about a trip the day before. When I would go into the office the next morning, I would have eight dimes, eight quarters, eight nickels. She would have them separated and ready for me to put them into a little container in my car so I never had to stop and could just throw in the right amount and go through. It was that kind of detail and listening and laughing, and being a dear friend, and being a presence to our sisters that was so important to her life. She was also a big part of the cluster I was in. She saw things to the end and was very gentle.

Bonnie Pyne Lacey

I was at St Paul High School [in San Francisco] from 1961 to 1965 with Sister Eleanor. I joined the convent in 1965 where she was the postulant mistress at Guadalupe College. She was a true lady and true to her faith.

Margaret L. Cole

Sister was my French teacher at Holy Family High School in Glendale, Calif. I will always remember her soft voice and her kind manner when I was having a hard time pronouncing the words correctly. I graduated from Holy Family in June 1958. I am sure Sister is in Heaven with the Blessed Mother and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lisa Wiegand, Former Mount Carmel Nurse Aide & Current Volunteer

I will so miss Sister Eleanor. I loved how she told me about the canoe trip she went on when she was a Girl Scout and the stories about her mother and a watch that she received when she graduated. I will so miss her, but now I know she is with her mother, who she missed so much over the many years, and she is with Jesus.