



SISTER M. SEBASTIAN JELLISON
August 20, 1919 – February 6, 2005

Sister Sebastian Jellison was a woman of integrity, deep faith, immeasurable hope, and great love.

As a woman of **intelligence and integrity**, Sebastian lived what she believed. She took risks in her life and never said no to a new endeavor. She enjoyed a challenge. Sister Sebastian was a life-long learner and continued to take many courses and workshops long after she obtained her official degrees. She expected much of herself and of her students. She expected her students to learn. There was never a question that they wouldn't. She made sure of that.

If she thought a student had potential, she encouraged that student to be the best he or she could be. A former student of hers said, "Sister really helped to form our character." Students knew that Sister Sebastian expected them to arrive at their potential. She helped them, but not too much. She encouraged strongly and brought many a student to go way beyond their own expectations. Sebastian never compromised her principles with students, parents, or teachers. Once, at Sacred Heart in Glyndon, Maryland, she would not change a grade. She had the facts to back it up and held fast. She never caved in when it came to her integrity. Another time in Glyndon, she helped me with a particularly irate parent. I told her the parent was coming without an appointment to speak about a student in her room due to an incident on the playground. She knew immediately what happened because she was out there observing even though she didn't have to be there. Sebastian said, "You let me deal with him. He'll get the story straight." She witnessed what happened, and she was not about to back down to this man who tried to intimidate. Little did he know Sebastian was never intimidated when it came to her principles.

Sebastian was also a woman of **deep faith**. She wasn't one to speak of her faith openly, but she lived it devoutly. As Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote, "To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible." Sebastian was called to religious life at the age of 17. She believed this was her call, and she was faithful to it to the end. She was a prayerful woman and respected anyone's form of prayer. Her belief in God guided her heartfelt prayer. Her love of the Eucharist began at a very early age by participating daily in the liturgy with her mother at her home parish Saints Simon and Jude. This love of the Eucharist led her to take that Eucharist into her daily life and give of herself to others. An outstanding example of this was the time she spent with the dying. She was always willing to stay up with a sister who was dying or to accompany them to the hospital while administrator at Assumption Hall. Even at Caritas Christi, she continued to be present to the dying as long as she was able. Her very presence **radiated**

strength and hope to them, a belief in what was to come. Hope was to Sister Sebastian as Emily Dickenson described it, “the thing with feathers that perches in the soul. And sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all.”

In her last few months Sister Mary Zachary realized even more why she was such a great friend. She saw her accept her illness with grace and continue to be a strong source of hope and inspiration. Sister Corrine and Sister Rose Angela would come and pray the rosary in Sister Sebastian’s room. She loved to listen to them and other sisters pray. It was like a mantra to her. She was unable to pray as she would like, but their praying soothed and comforted her immensely. They in turn said that it was the least they could do because she had done so much for them.

Sister Sebastian’s strong hope, inner strength and purpose gave others courage just by her presence.

Finally, Sister Sebastian was a woman of great love for her family, her friends, and her community. Her immediate family included her parents Henry J. and Catherine Griebel Jellison, two sisters, Catherine and Theresa, and three brothers, Hilary, Regis, and Paul, the last living sibling. I know she came from a loving family just by how she spoke about her sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews and all other family members. She respected them greatly and prayed for them daily. They brought her great joy. Her face lit up from the inside out when she spoke about them. Many members of her family are with us today because they too, have that strong family bond handed down from generation to generation. The past few months she teased her brother Paul as to who would go first. She knew Paul didn’t like that too much, but it was her way of preparing him for what was to come and to let him know that she wasn’t afraid to die.

Sister Sebastian’s sisters in community are the better because of her. She helped many prepare for their own deaths. She helped many, like me, to become stronger in their convictions just by being present to us. She listened, she cared, and she loved. She touched our lives and left many images inscribed on our hearts.

Sister Sebastian, your family, friends and sisters love you, and we will miss you. Pray for us to be gifted with your strength when it is our time. Sister Sebastian, we say to you today what you said to us these past few months in your room, “You can go, now.”

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Brycelyn Eyster
February 10, 2005*