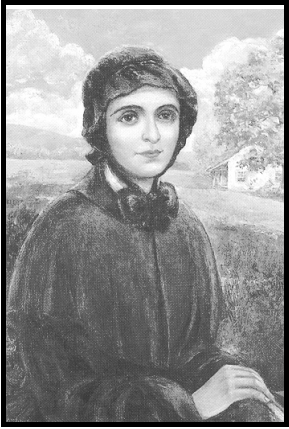


Sister Kevin Mary Mannion
October 8, 1931 - August 25, 2009



Today is one of the special days of this, our Bicentennial Year. This morning at morning prayer, we said our special prayers honoring the birthday of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. Sisters of Charity throughout the United States will pause and celebrate and honor Elizabeth. Those of us gathered here today have a dual reason to celebrate. We gather to bid farewell and to celebrate the life of our dear Sister Kevin Mary.

We might take a moment to imagine the wonderful reunion that took place in heaven as Kevin was reunited with her Mom, Dad, Unc (Sister Kevin Mary's mother's brother) who was very important to the family, her brothers Jack and Francis, who probably are teasing her about taking so long to get there. Sister Anita Marie (Hensel) in her quiet way is rejoicing and imagine actually meeting our Mother Seton and all of our sisters who are enjoying the life we all strive to achieve. As we prayed together this morning, we can say with Elizabeth Ann Seton, "There we shall be always joyful, always beholding the presence of Him who has purchased and prepared for us His unutterable glory."

On September 8, 1951, a rather shy but certainly earnest Irish lass named Agnes Theresa joined 17 other young women as postulants for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Agnes knew the Sisters of Charity from her school days at Saint Mary Magdalen in Homestead and also because her older sister had joined the sisters in 1945. Agnes had also spent the previous year as a student teacher and aide at DePaul School where her sister was missioned. Agnes was the fifth child of John and Catherine O'Connor Mannion and the second daughter born in the family. She joined her brothers, Jack, Francis, and Larry and her sister, Mary Catherine (our Sister Philomena) as they evened out the family with the welcome birth of the youngest child, Ann Celene. Her parents instilled in their children a deep love for God and a simple but persistent and faithful devotion to God lived out in the every day. Their home was filled with love of their Irish origins and their love of God and close and lasting relationships and concern for family.

On April 20, 1952, one week after Easter, Agnes received the habit and the name of Sister Kevin Mary, a name she kept throughout her life. She was educated at Seton Hill University with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and she received a Masters in Education from Duquesne University. She ministered as a primary teacher usually in first grade in schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Greensburg, and Altoona. At Saint Stephen School in Hazelwood she is remembered as a very successful, compassionate and caring principal. After years of service to the very young, Kevin joined Sister Anita Marie in service to the young at heart as co-administrator of Saint Therese Plaza in Munhall. Here she brought life, laughter and compassion to those who were journeying closer to the day when they would step into the new life promised to all who love God.

That short recital hardly captures the person of Sister Kevin Mary. Today we want to give thanks for the Sister who has walked with us in community for 58 years and who has loved and brought joy and laughter to her family of origin for almost 78 years.

Sister Kevin Mary brought a lightness of spirit to the group and, although, quiet and a bit shy, she had a sharp Irish wit and a ready smile. From the beginning of our days in the novitiate, Kevin enjoyed the simple things. She loved Sunday afternoons in the orchard, simplicity nights in the novitiate room, and the way we ended the day with prayer and hymns to Mary “Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue” and to the Infant, “I love thee smiling Baby King.” Sister Kevin Mary was not a frequent performer at simplicity nights but she was an eager member of the audience. Sister Therese Burns commented that years later, Sister Kevin Mary remembered all the words to the song, “Tiny Old Town,” that Sister Therese sang during special occasions. Kevin once noted that, “the evening ended early but we also rose early and we still had time to get into trouble.”

As the years went by, Kevin would be remembered by those she walked with and by those she served for her compassionate concern, her willingness to go the extra mile, her love for children, her sisters, and the elderly to whom she gave her concern, her life-giving joy and spirit, her ability to see the fun in small things and her quick wit and laughter.

Since her death on Tuesday evening, we have been hearing the stories of the children she encouraged to be their best, the parents she counseled with compassion and kindness, the sisters she remembered in kind notes and small gifts, the sisters’ parents to whom she ministered in the high rise, and the sisters she cared for as sister servant or colleague in school.

We have also remembered her ability to hope even when her life was filled with pain and suffering. We watched as one serious health difficulty seemed to be solved and another would once more hold her captive. But ask how she was doing, she would reply, “As well as I can. I think a bit better. This should help.” She lived in hope. Even in her suffering she would inquire about others.

Sister Kevin Mary lived life fully, and, at the time of her Golden Jubilee, she stated, “I found each day of life in the community one of growth in happiness and appreciation of God’s love through all the phases of my ministry with children, youth, and senior citizens.” She could say today with Elizabeth Seton as Elizabeth wrote in the fly leaf of her “Following of Christ,” “Jesus- infinity itself, boundless light, all delight, all bliss, all God, All this may be tomorrow if only from the sleep and dreams of life, I may . . . truly awake in Jesus.”

Dear Kevin, enjoy your reunion, watch over your sisters on earth, and in the words of this Irish blessing we bid you a most fond farewell until we meet again.

“Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.”

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Louise Grundish, SC
August 28, 2009*