

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Nancy Grace McMullen

(Sister Ann Patrick)

BORN: October 1939

ENTERED CONGREGATION: January 1957

DIED: December 24, 2017

“M ay the Lord let his face shine upon you; the sun rise up to greet you on your way.

These words of an Irish blessing are felt by those whose lives have been touched by the enriching presence of Sister Nancy McMullen.” These are the opening lines taken from the program celebrating her 25th Jubilee as a Sister of the Precious Blood. This seemed to be an appropriate way to begin Nancy’s eulogy and our remembrance and celebration of her life.

Nancy Grace arrived on October 7, 1939, in Bellefontaine, Ohio. She was the fourth of 14 children born to Joseph Gerald McMullen and Florence Gertrude (Vellenga) McMullen. Nancy’s younger brother Mark died shortly after his birth. The remaining 13 children, four girls and nine boys, became a very close knit “line-up” affectionately known as the “Lucky Thirteen!” Nancy credited her family with giving her “a great start and an enduring faith.” With a “baker’s dozen” they never found it difficult to find “enough players for a baseball game.”

Growing up in Bellefontaine, Ohio, Nancy attended St. Patrick School. When she was in the fifth grade, the Sisters of the Precious Blood came to teach at St. Patrick. Whether it was the “warm milk and cookies” given by Sister Donata for arriving on the first day with your books covered, or quietly working in the sacristy with Sister Marciana, there was something that made Nancy “envious of their lives.” With the influence of Sister Pauline, Nancy found herself attending Precious Blood High School in Dayton. In January 1957, she officially entered the postulancy of the Sisters of the Precious Blood.

In addition to receiving a B.S. in education from the University of Dayton and an M.A. in theology from Xavier University in Cincinnati, her being part of a large, loving family was probably great preparation for the 40-plus years Nancy would spend in classrooms educating students from age 8 through adult-

hood. She ministered as an elementary classroom teacher; a junior high math, science and religion teacher; as well as a high school religion teacher and department chair. These positions took her to Indiana, Arizona, back to Ohio, Missouri, Virginia and once again back to Ohio. Of the 60 years that Nancy celebrated as a Sister of the Precious Blood, she gave nearly 45 years to ministry in the classroom. Clearly Nancy had the gifts needed to effectively handle a classroom. The last 20 years of her teaching career, spent in the adult classroom, passing on our Catholic faith, may have been where her passion as an educator was most fulfilling. In 2011, Nancy completed her ministry of teaching and serving as the coordinator for the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program (LPMP) in the northern area of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Of this ministry Nancy wrote, “The blessing of this ministry was to witness firsthand the life blood of the church which is flowing in the veins of many men and women who are searching for deeper spiritual lives and ways to give back to the church and their community.”

Through the years, Nancy was called upon to share her gifts within her CPPS congregation. From 1987 to 1991, Nancy served in elected leadership as a Councillor. Upon retiring from the classroom in 2011, Nancy accepted the position as Council Secretary, where she has served for the past six years. Over the years her gifts, developed as hobbies, yielded numerous logos and graphic designs used for various congregational gatherings.

Nancy was by no means an “all work and no play” type of person. Nancy enjoyed time with her family, especially the family reunions. She was a founding member of, and faithful participant in, her monthly “Fun Group” — four Sisters who gathered regularly for a meal, conversation and game time, which often involved some gambling that typically yielded a winning pot amounting to about \$.90. Nancy wrote of several events in her life that really stand out as highlights: serving on the Community Council; biking 2,000 miles from Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado to Dayton,

Ohio; biking across the New England states; traveling to Ireland with family in 2003 was a dream come true; and most recently, the opportunity to celebrate 60 years as a Sister by touring some of the U.S. national parks, which just happened to be celebrating 100 years!

Many years ago, Nancy began collecting small turtles. Originally, the turtles, Nancy said, “were a reminder that I should be willing to stick out my neck, take (on) a challenge, learn new things.” Over the years the collection of turtles, today numbering more than 75, has come to be a “reminder to keep my feet on the ground and to move steadily ahead with purpose.”

This eulogy begins with a quote written about Nancy for her 25th Jubilee. The writer calls Nancy an “enriching presence.” Recently, while visiting another Sister at Good Samaritan Hospital, I encountered a young male nurse who cared for Nancy both on the fourth floor of the Heart Hospital, and later in ICU. He was saddened by the news of her death. With tears in his eyes, he said, “She was a special presence!” He shared that he had remained after work one night and read Bible verses to Nancy. He shared that she wanted to hear: Love is patient. Love is kind ... and also Blessed are the peacemakers ...

Nancy Grace McMullen will be remembered for having a twinkle in her eye, for her peaceful smile that could erupt into a hearty laugh. Like her beloved turtles, she will be remembered for her willingness to stick out her neck, to try something new, to take hold of a challenge, or to ride her way into an adventure. Like the Scripture she wanted to hear during her time of suffering, she will be remembered for her patience, for her kindness, for her generosity. Nancy, I am confident that when you heard the call to begin the journey home, you strapped on your helmet, raised your hands into the air and peddled your way, with purpose, into the open arms of the God you have loved and served for a lifetime. Godspeed, Nancy!

— Sister Patty Kremer