

JUBILARIANS 2020



VOCATIONS

PRECIOUS BLOOD SISTER REFLECTS ON 40 YEARS: SISTER KAREN ELLIOT, C.P.P.S., LEADS A LEGACY OF HOPE THROUGHOUT OHIO

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by Regan Meyer

For Sister Karen Elliott, C.P.P.S., everything in her life was pointing towards religious life; it just took God's hand to give her the final push.

Born to a cradle Catholic mother and convert father in Dayton, Sister Elliott spent her childhood attending Masses every Sunday and listening to her Biblically literate father argue the Bible with his relatives. After Vatican II, she began to play guitar in Mass.

Sister Elliott first thought about becoming a sister in the second grade, but she didn't start seriously considering religious life until college. When she was at Wright State University she befriended a group of sisters, and, after attending a discernment weekend, she realized her calling to religious life.

"I ended up talking to my boyfriend, who was not Catholic. He said, 'Karen, you will really be good at that,' which made me cry – it still chokes me up today. He didn't talk about his own ego or what it meant for him. He really encouraged me, which I think was a grace-filled moment."

Her family was supportive as well. But when she told her uncle about her decision, he pointed out the irony that the only person in the family with a college education was going to take a vow of poverty.

"It doesn't make sense," she said. "But, you don't enter religious life because it makes sense. You feel a calling. If you really pray and think about things, God finds a way to change your mind and heart."

In her 40 years as a Sister of the Precious Blood, Sister Elliott has ministered all over Ohio.

During her first ministry in Findlay, she started Hope House, a ministry for homeless women and children. At that point, the other sisters in the convent had moved on to other ministries, so Sister Elliott launched the shelter in the empty convent.

"We rented the convent for a dollar a year. It was a miracle. It honestly was of God. Everything just came into place, everything we needed. The generosity of the people of Findlay continues to inspire me."

Thirty years later, Hope House is a thriving non-profit, ministering to the homeless people of Findlay and providing homeless prevention and housing to the community.

After Findlay, she went to Most Pure Heart of Mary Parish in Shelby, OH, and earned a doctorate degree in ministry with a focus on scripture from Barry University in Florida. She then took a position Mercy College in Toledo.

While at Mercy, she chaired the Religious Studies department and worked as a professor. She started a program where students would travel to Guatemala to serve children with severe physical and mental disabilities at a long term care facility called Santo Hermano Pedro.

She recalled a story of a young man who, after a day of interacting with the children, was angry with God and wondering why He lets people live in suffering. After returning from Guatemala, the student gave his presentation about his time at Santo Hermano Pedro.

"He shared the story of his anger. And then, he couldn't talk and started crying. He said, 'God let them live to show me the importance of the human person. If that's all we ever did, it was worth it.'

Though that happened in 2005, Sister Elliot cries every time she tells the story.

Currently, Sister Elliott is in her fourth year as director of Mission Integration at Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati. She says that the enthusiasm of her students is inspiring.

"I see a real desire to grow in faith. There's an openness to other people. I don't agree that the Church is dying."

Just recently, someone asked Sister Elliott to choose her favorite ministry. She couldn't. "I love them all. I'm just blessed by every single place I've been. Sharing the faith with people is absolutely inspiring. I'd like to say that I give everything to them, but they give everything to me."

View a full list of this year's religious jubilarians click [here](#).

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