



Sister Nancy Raley

BORN: January 1940

ENTERED CONGREGATION: 1959

DIED: March 20, 2022

How does one honor Nancy — our sister, aunt, cousin, partner in mission, colleague and friend? How does one honor:

- A woman of insatiable curiosity with a thirst for knowledge that often found her reading three or four books on different topics at the same time.
- A woman whose adventuresome spirit drew her to travel and who was thrilled to experience diverse cultures through food, the arts and events.
- A woman who thrived on challenge and embraced risks head on.
- A woman who was efficiently organized yet versatile in her pragmatic approach to most of life.
- A woman who was humble, often saying, “I don’t have it figured out yet” or “I’ve come to realize...”
- A woman who was faithful to her ever-changing and evolving life in God.

In speaking of Nancy’s life, I’m going to use the image of a kaleidoscope — an image she used when pondering her life after 50 years as a sister.

Nancy Ellen Raley was born in 1940, in Canton, Ohio, to Catherine Elizabeth Spratt Raley and Alan Victor Raley, who Nancy described as persons of integrity and faith. A brother, Joe, and sister, Jane, were born in the next few years. When Nancy was about 5, they moved to Cleveland, where her younger sister Rita joined the family. Growing up in Cleveland, Nancy attended public school before transferring to Our Lady of Good Counsel in second grade. That is where she met the Sisters of the Precious Blood and where her interest in becoming a Sister was sparked. She was attracted to religious life “because of the Sisters’ life of dedication and enthusiasm for ministry.” As a junior in high school, Nancy transferred to Precious Blood High School in Dayton, and she officially entered the Congregation on Jan. 6, 1959. After a time of formation, Nancy attended the University of Dayton, graduating in 1964 with a degree in home economics. This was followed by a dietetic internship at St. Mary’s Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota.

The kaleidoscope mosaic rotated to a new pattern when she went to Marian Hall in Flint, Michigan, as a dietician. Working with the elderly residents, coupled with positive memories of her maternal grandfather, awakened an interest in working with older adults. After Marian Hall and a summer at Kneipp Springs, Rome City, Indiana, Nancy pursued and received a master’s in institution administration from Michigan State University in 1970. This

was followed by ministry in food service at the Motherhouse in Dayton. She was an integral part of the Motherhouse becoming the Maria Joseph Living Care Center as it transitioned into a long-term care center where she became assistant to the administrator and later administrative director of patient services. Those were stressful yet exciting and creative times. I had the privilege of working with Nancy during this time. Those of us in middle management considered these years as some of our best professionally in terms of functioning as a collaborative team. Nancy’s steadfast spirit and leadership were a significant contribution to our success.

In 1978 the kaleidoscope took another colorful turn as Nancy began working with the civic community. She enjoyed the opportunity to manage the senior nutrition program for Montgomery County, Ohio. Several years later, she moved to Washington as a public health nutritionist in the District of Columbia Office on Aging where she was responsible for a larger and more complex senior nutrition program that served poor seniors throughout the District. At this time, she also served on the board of directors for Food Bank of the National Capital Area. Nancy considered her time in D.C. a highlight of her ministry and felt she benefited from the challenge and energy of ministering and living in a city with such cultural diversity.

The kaleidoscope turned once again as she returned to Ohio, became a licensed nursing home administrator and in 1985 served as an administrator of The Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio, where she also served on the board of trustees for the Darke County Mental Health Clinic in Greenville.

Making another kaleidoscopic turn, she was called to congregational leadership in 1991, and for the next 12 years she served on the Community Council. Of this time she said: “The blessings of congregational service helped me grow in my understanding of the church and religious life. My community of Sisters inspired me with their faithfulness, generosity to people in need, and commitment to addressing the social justice issues of our world.” Over the years, Nancy also shared her person and gifts generously with the Congregation in the treasurer’s office and by chairing our legislative Assembly and numerous other committees. In fact, Nancy was chairing a congregational committee at the time of her death.

Where would the kaleidoscope turn next? Nancy was experiencing increas-

ing hearing loss and felt it would be a hindrance to returning to administration. So she volunteered at Catholic Social Services in the food pantry and development office, mostly doing data entry and acknowledgement letters. Nancy expressed it this way: “I have a hearing loss, which helps me focus on the task at hand. I like computers and working with software programs; it’s challenging, interconnected, and can be fun.” Nancy felt her service at Catholic Social Services helped them fulfill their mission of strengthening individuals and families through faith, service and charity. During this time, she also served on two Dayton nonprofit boards: Mercy Manor and St. Mary Development.

Nancy’s last 10 years were a time of transition into a slower pace as gradually her volunteer activities ended. The kaleidoscope of life once again shifted as health issues called her to attend to her own well-being which she considered a kind of ministry. She came to find “each day a new beginning which brought its own joy.” She was grateful for the blessings that had been hers and “hoped that in sharing with others she helped shape a better community.” Nancy was “proud to be a member of a community of women who chose to bring life in prayer, presence and ministry.”

This is but a glimpse at Nancy’s life that had many more pursuits, accomplishments, adventures and awards. What’s important to remember is Nancy’s life was a life well lived as a response to God’s love and generosity.

What’s important is to honor Nancy by gleaning something from her life to enrich your own living.

Maybe it’s...

- Being open to new experiences.
- Being adventuresome and stepping out of one’s comfort zone.
- Being willing to embrace challenges and risks.
- Believing in the grace to transform obstacles into opportunities.
- Being faithful and attentive to one’s commitments.
- Balancing work with diverse interests and activities.
- Gracefully letting go and letting be when life changes and evolves.

Nancy, our companion on the journey, God’s good and faithful servant has won her reward.

Nancy, we love you. We miss you.

— Sister Margo Young