

IN MEMORIAM



## Sister Virgine Elking

BORN: April 1930

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 15, 1948

DIED: June 21, 2022

I was privileged to hear Elie Wiesel give a lecture. He began by saying, "God created humans because God loves stories." As I reflected on my own life, I realized that not only was my life an interesting story, but I think at times that God wrote the script. Otherwise, how could many of these events happen.

My childhood was affected by two facts: We lived through the Great Depression and then World War II. My two brothers were in the Navy, and every evening our rosary was prayed for them. The rosary was a prayer we said every night for as long as I could remember. Indeed we were a very religious family. Our whole life centered around Holy Trinity Church and our faith. There seemed to be a "Catholic" reason for everything we did. Both my parents were German Catholics from Mercer County. Probably that explains many things. Perhaps that is why the novitiate was really a carryover from so many things I learned at home.

As a teenager, I belonged to the Knights of St. John Drill Team, attended Julianne High School, and started the Dominicanettes in addition to the other religious elements of being a member of Holy Trinity.

Although I wanted to be a nurse,

Mother Nathalia insisted I teach for three years before going into nursing. But after three years, I fell in love with teaching and so from the wheat fields of North Dakota to the palm trees of Florida to the Atlantic coast, I spent 32 years teaching and in administration. Actually, I think I learned more than I taught. In North Dakota for example, I learned the difference between an Allis-Chalmers and John Deere tractor (one is yellow; the other, green). The children taught me also the correct pronunciation of Geronimo, what sod houses were and what it meant to battle the elements. At Resurrection I learned what it meant to be black in the '60s. At St. Margaret Mary I learned I could be boring. Whenever the kids would say, "Tell us a story, Sister. We learn more from your stories than we do your preaching." Even though I insisted I didn't preach, they would just roll their eyes and repeat, "Tell us a story." And then there was Maurawood in West Palm Beach, Florida. Maurawood was a residence home for unwed pregnant teenagers. I had the impressive title of resident treatment specialist, roughly translated into Lamaze teacher, labor coach, chauffeur, listener, home economics teacher and, my favorite, "Grandma." Most of the girls did not have a good relationship with their moms, so I was never "Mom" — just Grandma.

I attended Boston College and received an additional master's degree in pastoral ministry and spirituality. It was there that I became interested in chaplaincy. I did that training at Kettering Medical Center. I worked as chaplain at Miami Valley Hospital for 10 years and as a volunteer for four additional years.

I continued my work with the RCIA process at both Ascension and Precious Blood parishes.

I moved to Salem Heights in 2004 and then to Emma Hall in 2009. There I continued in volunteer ministry by praying, visiting the lonely, keeping vigil with the dying and doing lots of odd jobs as Resident Council president.

Indeed, my story shows how blessed I was.

When I ministered to the dying, I frequently read the passage from the Book of Revelation (27:1-7). Now I get to hear those words, "Welcome home, Virgine, good and faithful servant. You have won the victory. I will be your God, and you shall be my daughter for all eternity."

Amen

— Sister Virgine Elking