

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER M. DEBORAH KELLY
March 22, 1920–January 31, 2017

*So teach us to number our days,
that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.
Psalm 90:12.*



In my preparation for our reflections on the great gift of Sister Deborah Kelly to our lives and the lives of so many in worlds touched by the presence of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, I realized my limitations in choosing words to express God's powerful gifts given through one Sister of Charity who made choices in her life which reached heights of greatness.

Kathleen Mathison Kelly (our Sister Deborah Kelly) was born March 22, 1920, in Wheeling, West Virginia. Her Father was Dr. Michael B. Kelly and her Mother was Kathleen Mathison. She was baptized March 28, 1920, and confirmed May 23, 1926.

Kathleen was the youngest of four children. As a child, she was active in playing baseball with her brothers. She excelled in math, winning contests, along with her interests in history, languages, and literature at Mt. DeChantal Academy in Wheeling.

After graduating from Mt. DeChantal Academy, many colleges offered her scholarships, including Seton Hill College, her final choice. Her college experiences at Seton Hill included sports (basketball, hockey, and archery) and writing, in addition to earning a bachelor of arts degree in mathematics, with a minor in chemistry. After graduation, Kathleen worked for a year as an analytical chemist for DuPont Corporation in Charleston. Then, on September

8, 1943, Kathleen (soon to be Sister Deborah Kelly), entered the Sisters of Charity.

Sister Deborah's higher education continued for years. Sister Deborah earned a master of arts degree in mathematics from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and did graduate study at the University of Chicago and Notre Dame University, Indiana. Additional study included National Science Foundation study grants and programs offered for educators.

Sister Deborah's teaching career began in Pittsburgh at Resurrection School and Elizabeth Seton High School in Brookline.

From 1946 on, Sister Deborah was a vital part of the ministry of the Sisters of Charity at Seton Hill College/University. Sister Deborah's tenure at Seton Hill began in 1946, after World War II, when G.I.'s returning from the war studied at Seton Hill. Her teaching of mathematics continued during academic years and in summer programs from 1946 to 1971 and included service as the Chairperson of the Math Department from 1965 to 1970.

In 1971, Sister Deborah became the Seton Hill College Registrar. She was the Registrar of the College from 1971 to 1990. Her duties ranged from advising transfer students to administrative duties assisting in preparing the college catalog.

Sister Deborah speaks of her life and choices directly: "Several sisters influenced me, and I suppose they are the reason I am a Sister of Charity today. Sister Miriam Joseph became my friend when I was a sophomore at Seton Hill. She was advisor to the '*Setonian*,' taught in the English department, and was a proctor on 'Fourth Admin' where I lived. Her wit, her

wisdom, her counsel, her warmth, and genuine interest in all of us were appealing to a shy, quiet, but discerning, sophomore. We remained friends for more than fifty years.”

Friends of Sister Deborah among alumni and former students, fellow professionals, visitors to the College, Sisters of Charity, and those from other religious orders are too numerous to include here. However, just yesterday, I received an e-mail testimonial from Sue Turner, an alumna and co-worker of Sister Deborah, which is indeed a testimonial of Sister Deborah’s commitment to students and her life work at Seton Hill University. I’d like to share it. Sue Turner was the first admissions counselor at Seton Hill to focus on transfer student admissions.

Testimonial–Sister Deborah Kelly, S.C.–Deceased 1/31/2017

I worked with Sister Jean Boggs as an admissions officer for Seton Hill College from 1970–1974. We could see that due to the declining number of eighteen-year-olds graduating from high school, we would need to find additional sources of students to keep enrollment statistics healthy. Those sources were community colleges, where students would study for two years to complete an associate’s degree, but then need a four-year college to complete their bachelor’s degree. As the registrar, Sister Deborah was critical to our recruitment efforts. She understood that her timely review of academic credits could make a big difference in a transfer student’s decision to commit to Seton Hill. The number of transfer credits was equivalent to time and money that would need to be spent at Seton Hill to complete the four-year degree. Sister Deborah was always gracious in her dealings with me, and greeted me with her beautiful smile, even when the demands on her time were great. The transfer student business always seemed to be at its highest just about

the beginning of the semester when returning students were also trying to register. I know that Sister Deborah and I were always happy when the frenetic pace subsided, and the new semester was underway. I am grateful to have known Sister Deborah as a student, fellow administrator, mentor, and friend. I will miss seeing her the next time I visit Caritas Christi. My wish for her is to have a joyful reunion with her sisters who have gone before her, and share an adult beverage with them in heaven.

*Susan A. Turner
Class of 1969*

In concluding my reflections, I came across a few quotes about mathematics.

- *Einstein: “Pure mathematics is, in its way, the poetry of logical ideas.”*
- *Georg Cantor: “In mathematics, the art of proposing a question must be held of higher value than solving it.”*
- *Stefan Banach: “Mathematics is the most beautiful and powerful creation of the human spirit.”*

I am in awe that Sister Deborah, my teacher, was blessed to spend her life in the study of a field with unlimited possibilities. Sister Deborah patiently gave this exposure to her students.

May she rest in peace!

*Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Jean M. Boggs, SC
February 4, 2017*