

REFLECTION ON THE LIFE OF SISTER MARY HALLORAN
April 17, 1927–January 9, 2020



*It is a sweet thought
to dwell on those I most tenderly love,
if we do not meet again here,
we shall be united in heaven.”*

~ Elizabeth Ann Seton

These words of Elizabeth Seton were noted at the top of the paper entitled *Funeral Arrangements for Sister Mary Halloran*. What a fitting introduction— so Sister Mary.

The last line of the instructions stated, “*Thanks and Blessings to all. I’ll be watching!*” It was signed, in her masterful Palmer Method hand, “*Love, Mary.*”

So, I hope these reflections are as Mary would say at the end of most days, “*All in all, it was good.*”

As Mary celebrated her 90th birthday, she deemed the 90s as her “Decade of Delight” —a perfect description for her approach to life and to death— “Delight.”

She welcomed the glorious event that occurred on January 9, when the choirs of angels led her to paradise.

Mary Elizabeth Halloran was born at our Roselia Foundling and Maternity Hospital in 1927. In a presentation outlining the history of Roselia she authored in 2015, Mary shared that her mother was given the option, by her doctor, to give birth at a hospital or at Roselia. Ethel Halloran’s response to Mary’s question as to why she selected Roselia was, “Mary, the sisters knew as much as any doctor.”

Mary added, “I often wondered if Sister Marie Fidelis Bridge, my mother’s nurse, might have marked me, as she ‘swaddled and capped’ me, as a future member of the Sisters of Charity.”

Sister Mary Elizabeth (Sister John Mary) was a member of our Company of Charity for 71 years.

John and Ethel Halloran had four children: Ursula, Mary Elizabeth, Rose, and Jack (all born at Roselia).

Mary attended Penn Hills High School where she was the head cheerleader and a violinist in the school orchestra. A common response to learning that Mary was a cheerleader is “surprise,” as it seems so out of character. But does it?

Sister Mary really was a cheerleader for so many throughout her life. In her characteristic demeanor as a gentle woman, she offered encouragement and words of wisdom to her students, co-workers, sisters, and to all she met. She would help you find the positive and greet you with a supportive listening heart.

Her artistic and creative flair grew from music to writing. She had a fascination with writing Haikus. Mary wrote a Haiku for many sisters at the time of their death. In reading the numerous pages of her Haikus, I discovered one that was not identified as written for a particular person or event. I concluded, this one is Mary’s!

Jesus, let my heart

Beat with Your heart

This is my prayer.

After high school, Mary worked for four years as an executive secretary at the Roosevelt Hotel in Pittsburgh. I am sure she was applauded for her professionalism, perfectionism, and simple elegance, which she brought to all of her ministries as a Sister of Charity.

Mary entered the Sisters of Charity in 1949. She served as a teacher and principal in parish schools of the dioceses of Greensburg, Altoona, Pittsburgh and Bethesda from 1951–1974. She taught grades two to six. Everyone who met Mary was captivated by her voice, even her students. In the early 70s, a sixth grader at Saint Stephen School proclaimed, “Our sister reads a story to us at the end of each day, and she is from England.”

Sister Mary moved from teaching to serve the Diocese of Greensburg at the Matrimonial Tribunal as secretary, auditor, advocate, and assessor. Later she served the diocese as the Director of the Office of Religious. She also served as Secretary of the Congregation.

Mary had two wood carvings displayed in her room with the following words that capture and reflect her approach to life:

“Every Sunset Brings Promise of a New Dawn”

and,

“Cherish the Simple Things.”

The quote from Elizabeth Seton that Mary selected for her obituary speaks to her deep faith. “He is with me, and what can I fear. . . . I look neither behind nor before, only up.”

In 2017, for her interprovincial introduction article, Sister Mary wrote, “I dream of a future where the love and concern of others will support me in my powerlessness, embrace me in my frailty, sing at my funeral, and remember me in prayerful memory as I join the Company of Charity in heaven.”

Mary, we are singing and rejoicing for you and with you as you now rest with the Company of Charity in heaven.

Funeral Liturgy, Reflection

Sister Susan Yochum

January 13, 2020