

MEMORIAL MASS June 30, 2021

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” (John 20:18)

These words of Jesus are often quoted in various contexts, and we know that Jesus is always with us especially when we gather together in His name. Today we are gathered in prayer on an unusual occasion: to remember, honor, and offer prayer for three of our Sisters. In some ways this speaks to the strong community among the Sisters of Charity.

As we remember these Sisters, let us marvel at all they were called to do during their lives as Sisters of Charity: “As a congregation we stand open to appeal, ready to respond and willing to serve wherever the Church and the world most needs us.” (*Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 7) Let us think of the various ways our three Sisters, Sister Marie Corona Miller, Sister Eleanor Gibbons, Sister Mary Gertrude, carried out God’s call in their lives.

SISTER ELEANOR GIBBONS

March 7, 1936–January 18, 2021



The next Sister we remember and honor today is Sister Eleanor Gibbons, who was certainly “open to appeal, ready to respond and willing to serve wherever the Church and the world most needed her.” Sister Eleanor was born in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, graduating from St. Luke High School, then entering the Sisters of Charity. With a degree in education and history from Seton Hill University, and a master’s degree in education from Arizona State University in Tempe, Sister Eleanor embarked on a teaching career that spanned thirty-five years. Her adventure had already begun: she taught in Sisters of Charity Schools in Lakewood, California; Apollo and Pittsburgh Pennsylvania; Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; and in Glyndon, Maryland, where she was vice-principal for a time.

A new universe opened for Sister Eleanor in 1979, when she became a member of the Matrimonial Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, serving as Procurator, Advocate, and Auditor. Sister Eleanor fulfilled this need in the Church for fifteen years. She then was in charge of the Before and After School Program at St. Mary School, Chandler. She then returned to the Matrimonial Tribunal in the Diocese of Phoenix for two years. Sister Eleanor worked in several charitable programs for the Saint Vincent DePaul Society, moving on to serve First Way, a Women’s Crisis Center in Phoenix.

All this would be more than enough for one lifetime. Looking through her folder, though, I found that she:

- published an article, “Ministry of the Older Adult,”

- taught religion one summer to young members of the Yaqui tribe of Native Americans,
- joined in vocation ministry, served as secretary to the Tucson-Pima County Safety Commission,
- taught art and was an artist herself,
- was named Volunteer of the Month by the First Way Pregnancy Center.

Sister Eleanor's entire ministry to different people of various age groups, all with different needs, is captured in a letter she wrote to parents of children in the Before and After School Program: ***Each child is to be treated with Respect, Love and Concern.***