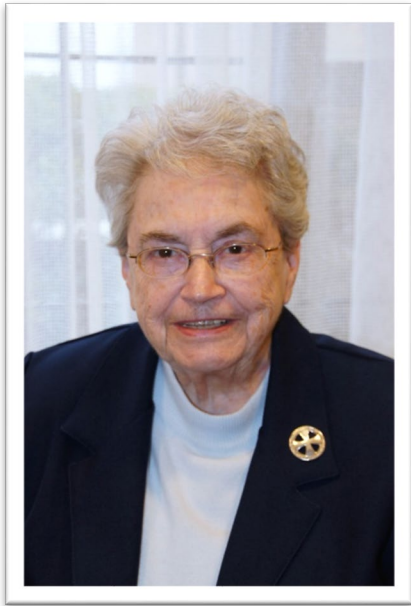


## REFLECTION

### SISTER M. ELLENITA O'CONNOR

November 2, 1927 – September 15, 2025



When one is invited to reflect on the life of another, especially today among the Community, one has some mixed emotions. In sharing a few memories, I hope to capture the genuine person who loved life and very much appreciated her Irish heritage while dedicating her fervent support of our beloved community. As we've prepared our good-byes, I've noticed the frequent use of the words, "our dear Ellenita," followed by phrases extolling her endless contributions through her various

ministries: primary education, secondary school leadership, civic planning and corporate financial strategies, service as congregational treasurer, social justice movements, quiet, while expanding advocacy for the needs of minorities and the marginalized. She maintained an active membership on Seton Hill College Board of Trustees and other supportive committees and boards. . . we have a beautiful Obituary listing the highlights of Ellie's blessed life. . .which when we meet, merrily in Heaven, we'll rejoice in all the good she accomplished . . .in her personal and professional life. Ellenita demonstrated how giving one's entire life to God can be challenging, rewarding—not without pain or troubles but basically providing blessings to all who loved and worked with her. The Scriptural selections for today's liturgy "fit the bill" revealing clues to Ellenita's life and mission. - - (I'll return to that later.)

Although Ellenita entered the Sisters of Charity in 1945 and I in 1953, we had the same sponsor, Sister Edith Marie Fullen, an excellent, but demanding teacher of business subjects. Typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, business law, Gen. Business. She looked for opportunities to send us for part-time work in offices which wanted students from Sister of Charity Schools. It was a good start and beneficial.

When we began thinking about the call to religious life, Sister thought of us as her “spiritual daughters” and was always ready to help where and when we needed. Neither of us knew the other, but were they coincidences that revealed themselves over the years; or was there something special in the relationship? Both Ellenita and I were born in Crafton, baptized at St. Philip Church; our fathers owned bars/taverns – Ellie as an only child and I as the eldest of four – her family had moved to South Side, Carson Street and she attended Holy Cross School and Elizabeth Seton H.S; my family moved to Pgh. -Idlewood Station and I finished at St. Philip School with a two-week stint at Elizabeth Seton and then to St. Luke H.S. in Carnegie.

Ellenita worked at Kresge’s 5 & 10, but in her senior year at Seton worked as a telephone operator at the Bell Telephone Company on Warrington Ave. In all cases she showed her work ethic and determination to succeed. This spirit carried over in the congregation. Sister Ellenita once told us that she preferred her full religious name, but never corrected the shortened “Ellie” which was easily picked up by those who knew her.

She began teaching as a postulant in the primary grades and was a founding faculty member when we opened St. Jerome, Charleroi and Sacred Heart, Glyndon. Later she moved on to teaching business subjects and English at Salpointe for 8 years until appointed high school principal at her alma mater, ESHS. Her interest and planning skill resulted in the new classroom complex at Seton dedicated in August

1971. One of those coincidences struck me when I saw the worship program for today's liturgy with a picture of Our Lady and the ejaculation, "My Mother. . .my Confidence." Sister Edith Marie had that special devotion and frequently referred to it when she would send the two of us holy cards, badges with a reminder to turn in trust to the care of our Blessed Mother.

Sister Ellenita's interest and skill in buildings resulted in her move into the SC Planning Office in 1976 and in 1977 she was appointed treasurer of the Congregation. In 1989 she became manager of St. Joseph House of Hospitality until 1992 when she became Assistant Facilities Mgr. then Properties Mgr. and Project Planner for the construction of Caritas Christi from 1993 until its dedication in 1999.

By no means was that all. . .She planned and supervised the renovation to DePaul Center (from stable to office buildings), building the addition to DePaul Center, renovations at Doran, Bayley, Marian Hall. . .she's overseen and supervised maintenance and remodeling at other SC properties such as Fidelis House in Greensburg and conversion of ES school for use of the Sisters. Ellie had natural affinity for the field of building and housing. She attended many classes and workshops to expand her knowledge and become familiar with what was new in the industry. In 1990 Mayor Sophie Maslof appointed Sr. Ellenita to the Pgh. Housing Authority Board, where she served as a commission member for 2 years and was honored with a certificate for distinguished service in the field of housing and development in the Commonwealth of PA

With all that background, you may get an idea that (woe is me. . .poor thing. . .all work -- no play. . .) au contraire. . .she was a well-balanced individual, though quiet and a bit reserved, she was a delight living in community. . . I had that privilege in two different occasions and each was a very happy experience with the entire group. . . She had the knack of keeping up with

the news (she never missed –in the early days and beyond --the weekly tv newscast, Washington Week in Review and could remember and discuss the facts and foibles of political parties-- Democrats, and of course, Republicans Pride in her hometown showed strong in devotion to the Steelers and that's where her honesty triumphed. She had that Irish wit – could tease and be teased. . .She was always on time, in fact early for her meetings; he took her turn with cooking and together with Teresa Burns was totally satisfied with solid fare- -meat and potatoes . . .no experiments. She was cautious when the Council was traveling and warned against everyone taking the same plane. . .it was her concern and she'd promise to pray even if she couldn't convince of a change in plan.

I promised I'd come back to the Scripture Readings Ellie had chosen for this joyful day:

Her selection from Isaiah 25 captures a reliance on Providence in daily life. . .In her many ministries over the 80 years she faithfully served her Beloved and received God's loving care in return:

Behold our God in whom we looked to save us: . . .let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us.

The theme continues in Hebrews 3: 14 –“ We have become partners of Christ only if we maintain to the end that confidence with which we began.”

And finally, the wonderful story of meeting the Lord Jesus as two disciples made the journey to Emmaus and recognized Him in the breaking of the bread. A few weeks before Ellenita died, I stopped at her room to give her Holy Communion. Ellie had difficulty in swallowing the sacred Host so I quietly entered the room to double check her ability. Her eyes at first opened when I came in and I asked her wish; she answered immediately in a strong voice: “

Oh, Yes! “ with a small piece of the Host and a sip of water, Ellenita met her loving God, , , in the breaking of the bread.

*Sister Jean Augustine*

*September 19, 2025*