

To Paschal, Aine, Peggy, Sean, Fionnuala and you families, we offer our deep sympathy.

As you know Eileen loved you all very much-

We, Sisters feel we know you from the pictures and her stories about you. Like you we all are recovering from the shock of Eileen's unexpected death, RIP.

I feel honoured to have been invited to give the reflection.

On Thursday, here in Magheramore, we had a beautiful Prayer gathering- REMEMBERING Eileen. How I wish you could have been present to hear the stories about your beloved sister. They were truly inspiring.

Wasn't Eileen a great companion on the journey of life? Gifted in so many ways- thoughtful, helpful, kind, cheerful as well as enthusiastic beyond belief. Eileen was blessed too with an infectious sense of humour that helped lift the heaviness in various situations.

I can only imagine how sad you all were the day Eileen left home to enter the Columban Convent in Wicklow and of course what a joy she brought to the community here.

I first met Eileen in our Lady of Guadalupe Convent, Los Angeles, California. We welcomed her wholeheartedly. With her characteristic enthusiasm, Eileen entered onto both our community life as well as life in the school. She was loved and respected by pupils and parents.

A born teacher she was completely at home in the classroom. No doubt she picked up many teaching skills from her dear mother.

At the time of her Final Profession of Vows and after a lot of prayer and reflection, Eileen chose as her motto the words of Jesus at the Last Supper "Love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12). These words are engraved on the inside of her ring, but more importantly they were emblazoned on her heart too. The Word of God in all its richness was precious to Eileen. She studied and prayed with the Word diligently. Her faith and love of God was a living Reality. For her, God was very real.

As I reflected back on this part of her life, the experience in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish was a remote preparation for Peru. With the exception of the English Mass for children on Sundays, all the other Masses were in Spanish. In addition, Eileen would have been familiar with the hymns and songs and culture of the Spanish community.

In Chicago, her next stop she studied and it was a sheer delight to get to know Fionnuala, Brendan and the Casey family and their friends. Large- hearted the concerns of all the branches of the Rabbitte families were also hers.

Peru was her great love. She threw herself into life there on all levels. Very aware that language learning was ministry, Eileen set out to master it. The music, songs and dance became part of her also.

Eileen's love for the poor touched many people and opportunities to be of service abounded. Her zeal for mission knew no bounds and her vibrant mission spirit found expression in her willingness "to be sent" wherever a particular need arose.

Ordinary situations became special and "extra" ordinary for Eileen. On the occasions we happened to meet, she'd quote her brother in law and say: "We'll do this for a memory".

I had the joy of being with her on so many "missionary journeys". Generally our practice was to share our reflections on the Scripture and critique each other's outline for the homilies. One incident stands out for me: It was late September; we had been introduced to a new hymn, "The Canticle of the Sun" in honour of St. Francis of Assisi. Tirelessly, we sang it until it was memorized. October 4 would be Sr. Mary Francis' feast day and the aim was to surprise her.

Eileen's readiness to meet "extra" mission needs together with her generosity of spirit is such an admirable quality and her ease in this regard made life easier for many.

As I was "doing research" for this sharing, I was amazed to realize of the different times that she had left-"let go" of Peru to go to the U.S to help out with mission outreach.

Love of all things missionary characterized her until the end. Just a few weeks ago, Eileen gave her final mission talk in Curraghboy, Co. Roscommon in the Diocese of Elphin.

During her hospital stay, I had the joy of a long visit with her. We shared on a deep level.

It was a very frustrating experience that Eileen was unable to communicate easily, with us. Furthermore, she admitted even informal prayer to God was impossible. However the line "Be still and know that I am God" from Psalm 46 was a huge comfort and one of her "life-lines".

Although she was spared the physical pain, the emotional part was deep-Eileen was accepting what God seemed to be sending with great resignation.

The "letting go" practice was such a large part of her and she practiced it to the end. Eileen was at peace on all the levels that mattered. She embraced the saying of our Patron St. Columban, "Humbly trust in the gentleness of God". Yes, the God she had fallen in love with and whose love she had responded to with her life took her gently home to Heavenly Mansions that had been prepared for Eileen.

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