

Sister Frances Eileen Dunne, BVM
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, May 31, 2016

Bob Collins, Nephew

I am one of Sister's many nephews and she does have many nephews and nieces. Being a typical Irish family from the west side of Chicago, there are a lot of us! On Feb. 22, 1925, Cecilia was born in Chicago to Patrick and Nora (Buckley) Dunne. Both Pat and Nora were immigrants from Ireland. Pat, being the very enterprising person that he was, realized that he had to get a job and wanted to find a really good job. He became a Chicago policeman. He could speak English so they hired him. I say this in all reverence to him because I was a policeman in Chicago, my brother Mike was a policeman in Chicago and my son Daniel is a policeman in Chicago. We learned where the money was in Chicago.

Nora and her sister Margaret (Maggie) came from Ireland and they went to Ottawa, Ill. I can only imagine that Ottawa around the turn of the century had to be a relatively small community. It was along the canal that was being dug from Chicago. Nora, although not having a lot of money, decided to get on the train and go to Chicago for a dance. There she met Pat. They got married and had eight children: Joe, Mary, Jack, Pat, Catherine, James, Jerry and Cecilia. Some of those are Irish sounding names. The three girls went to St. Mary HS. It seems like that was the place to go if you were from the west side. Two of the three decided that this BVM thing wasn't such a bad gig. My mother Kate, who was the rather rambunctious one, decided the phone company would be better.

One of the things I learned very early on in this Dunne family was to never, ever let the truth get in the way of a good story. These people could tell stories that would spin your head. They all were growing up in the Depression. I would hear stories like "We were so poor that my mother would hang a pork chop from the pull on the kitchen light. We would just sit there and look at the pork chop. That's how poor we were." When you were a kid and heard this you thought, "Wow, they were *really* poor!" When you got older you thought, "Who would hang a pork chop? What would you do with a pork chop hanging from a light?"

I find it hard when people have different names. She grew up as Cecilia Dunne. She comes to the BVMs and they change her name to Sister Frances Eileen. When I was a really young kid it was Sister Mary Frances Eileen with no Dunne on the end. To my cousins and me, she was Aunt Sis. That's how we knew her; we knew she was a nun, but she was Aunt Sis. I was about five years old and over at my grandmother's house on W. Crystal St. in Chicago. We used to go over there on Sundays for dinner. She had more than one pork chop at that time. We are out in the middle of the street playing ball. Here's Aunt Sis with the habit on playing baseball out in the street.

I heard today several times that she was a gentle, quiet person. No! Maybe around here she was. We have a Dunne family reunion every year. We've had it in the forest preserves, at a military base once (they kicked us out of there), restaurants and she looked forward to that

time. We would either go out to St. Eulalia in Maywood, Ill., to pick her up or we would go to Wright Hall to get her. She lived for these days; she wanted to be out with her family. She would roam around and talk with every family member. She would ask how they were, how their kids were, their grandkids were. She was a people person; she loved to be around people.

There's a picture of her dressed to go into a gold mine. This quiet, little nun was going into a gold mine in Lead, S.D. She was just a person who you wanted to be with. She was a very likable person. I found it very fitting with that last reading about dogs. She loved dogs. When she was at St. Eulalia she had a dog. I don't know who walked who, but that dog would drag her around. In fact, one time he dragged her around and broke her arm when he knocked her over. Instead of being mad at the dog, she was worried whether the dog was alright. She was just that kind of person.

From the Collins and the Dunne family, I want to thank you for being her family all these years, for taking care of her, for being there. She wanted to be with people and you were her kind of people. Several times when we visited her we saw that the care she was given was outstanding, this place is immaculate, and the people are very dedicated. If you walked into her room, you would see her prized possessions—the pictures of her family. She had pictures everywhere. We used to say, "Aunt Sis, what would you like for Christmas?" "Pictures. Send me pictures. I want to see the kids." Again, thank you for being there for her and for us.

Sister Helen Maher Garvey, BVM

If you were going to think about a summer vacation in a nice place you wouldn't exactly think of Brooklyn, N.Y. But there was a group and it included BVM Sisters Frances Eileen, Ellen Rita O'Hagan, and Kathleen Newell and Sister Lorna Colin, CSJ. Kathleen and Lorna were there and the other two would join them to teach primary kids during the summer. That went on for a long time. It was a sign of her dedication, as a family member has just said. She was extraordinarily devoted to children and she paid attention to poor children. They also had a wonderful time together. They formed a community that lasted for years.

Sister Mary Healey, BVM

For almost five years, I have read Sister's mail to her. In the beginning, she used to comment on the letters and the pictures. About a year ago, she gave up talking. She would listen and smile sometimes, especially when she got greeting cards from the family dogs. She loved dogs. One time within this past year, one of her nephews sent her a brown, plush puppy. After I opened the package, she took it, kissed it and held it close to her heart. I read his note and he suggested naming him. She said loud and clear, "It's a her!" That was the first thing I had heard her say in many months and the last thing I ever heard her say.

Valerie Brown, Parishioner, St. Eulalia Parish, Maywood, Ill.

First of all, the dog that broke Sister's arm was appropriately named Tipper. Sister Mary Therese Freymann notified me of Sister Frances Eileen's transition and asked me to write something. I have been asked to read what I have written.

Sister Frances Eileen Dunne, BVM was a wonderful teacher, a lovely lady, and my friend. I met her when I was a new parishioner at St. Eulalia Catholic Church in Maywood, Ill. I remember she sat about five pews behind me. When it came time for the "Kiss of Peace" I went to her and it was something in her eyes. So, after Mass I went up to her and introduced myself. That was our beginning.

Over the years we have been out to eat, simply talked for hours, wrote each other, even when she was in Maywood and then when she moved here and even when she could no longer write or speak. We even went camping together once. There were five of us. I didn't want that weekend to end. She was a great listener as well as talker. She hardly ever had a negative word about anybody or anything. She seemed to find beauty and God in everything. She loved animals and the outdoors. She was compassionate. She could bake a really good Irish Soda Bread and was certainly proud to be Irish. She absolutely did not like garlic or highly seasoned food. But, that's OK. God well-seasoned her life and did so abundantly.

Years ago Sister told me one of her favorite hymns was "Here I Am Lord." She loved this hymn and took the words to heart as she lived. She was always ready to serve all of God's people. She knew God called her and she went where He led. She definitely held His people in her heart. God has now called a special angel home. Sister Frances Eileen, you will be missed, never forgotten, always loved, and forever my Nun O' Fun.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I came here last August to work in the Support Services department. I never had the privilege of knowing Frances Eileen. Like one of her nephews who spoke, I am grateful for the care that we provide for our sisters. That is certainly true. One of those services is to make the sisters look beautiful. We have several cosmetologists on campus. This morning as Jody Kratz finished making Frances Eileen look beautiful, she said, "Oh, she would come every Tuesday to get her hair done. While some people think she was quiet, oh my, what a sense of humor she had!" So it's through the caring of other people that we treasure our sisters. I just thank Jody and the many, many staff who do so many things for all of us as we age and then go into God's hands.

Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM

When I was reading the reading about dogs, and I know that she loved dogs and hugged them through death, I thought that there is something else about her that I knew. When I was at Marian Hall and sitting at the table with three talkers, including myself, and one quiet nun, I didn't out Frances. If I want backing on some story I told that happened to be a little long, I would look at Frances and she would shift her eyes away from the others to me indicating that's enough. I don't really know what the Irish do, but they do tell stories. One other thing, she participated in the conversation with her eyes. The eyes kept looking at people, registered what they said, appraised it, lived it and laughed— all through the eyes.

Jim Dunne, Nephew

I have two quick personal stories of Aunt Sis. For years I would call her because I couldn't stop by. I would call her to just check in and say hello. She always answered her phone, "Hello." I

would say, "Hi, Aunt Sis! It's your favorite nephew Jimmy. That's how they knew me in the family, as Jimmy, and they still do even though I'm 72 years old. Through the years we would go through the same routine. Finally, not too many years ago, one day when I said that she said, "Wait a minute. How do you know you're my favorite nephew?" I said, "Aunt Sis, I never said I was your favorite nephew. I said I was your favorite nephew named Jimmy. You only have one of those."

During those telephone calls, I would always say, "Is there anything you need?" "Oh, no, they take great care of me here." One time I called and she said, "You know what? There is something." I thought that finally she was going to give me the opportunity to give her something. "What is it?" She said, "They don't give me enough Tylenol. I could use some extra Tylenol but they won't let me have it." Not thinking clearly at the time, I said, "OK, I'll send you some." She said, "Yes! Send me some Tylenol." So I went to the store and bought a large bottle of Tylenol, put it in a box and sent it to her. I waited a couple of days and then I called her, but she didn't say a thing about the Tylenol. I thought that was kind of weird so I said, "Aunt Sis, did you get the Tylenol that I sent to you?" There was nothing on the other end of the phone. I thought maybe she didn't hear me. "Aunt Sis, did you get the Tylenol that I sent to you?" All she said was, "I got busted."