



Wake Stories of Sister Mary Ernest Rothe, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, March 9, 2018

Sister Diane Forster, BVM

I will begin with some memories and comments received by email.

Her sister Lorraine Schneider let us know that they will have a memorial Mass on March 18 for Sister Mary Ernest, and she wanted us to know that “we loved her very much and appreciated her dedication to her vocation.”

Sister Mary Nolan, BVM wrote that she got to know Ernest a little at Mount Carmel during the summer Mary’s sister Peggy, also a BVM, was ill and dying. “Ernest roamed the halls and often stopped to talk to Tim (a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and brother of BVMs Mary, Pat, and Peggy). I think she connected him to her brother, who was a priest too.”

Sister Lynn Lester, BVM wrote that Ernest loved to walk outside. Lynn frequently walked with her and enjoyed their conversations. Lynn was amazed at Ernest’s memory of so many names of people she encountered in her life.

Sister Patsy Tang, BVM wrote, “We were friends from Incarnation, Glendale, Calif., days, where we shared much together. Ernest was at St. Agnes in Phoenix when my mom would take home-cooked meals to the sisters in the 1950s. Ernest always remembered my mom’s generosity. I last visited her in August 2017 at the Assembly. I could tell she was at a different stage. She may not have recognized me, but affirmed me, as she usually did.”

Peggy Peck writes, “I am Peggy Peck, former BVM associate and “baby” sister of Sister Gwen Farry, BVM. Sister Ernest was a dear friend of mine and my daughters. I met Sister Ernest when my two daughters were very little. She knitted or crocheted darling sweaters for them. She told me, when I lived in Glendale, that she prayed for the three of us daily. How wonderful! When I came back to Dubuque in 2000, I spoke to Sister Ernest. She again told me that she prayed for my daughters and me daily. Through the years, every time Sister Gwen spoke to her, she always asked about the three of us. How comforting! She was such a dear.”

Two former BVMs sent very brief comments. Kathleen Jackson wrote, “God bless the dear, good sister.” From Rosario Carter Milani, “May Ernest rest in peace.”

Jenna, Former CNA

One particular memory of Ernest is that she absolutely loved her family. It was about Thanksgiving time when she got a card from her sister. Her sister lovingly referred to her as Dottie. When she was reading her card, her entire face lit up. All of you know the smile that Ernest had. It just made me feel very good.

On third floor Caritas, we had a Christmas tree where the sisters who were unable to travel around the rest of Mount Carmel could hang ornaments. Ernest, being Ernest, wanted to make sure all the other sisters were able to go ahead of her and put their ornaments on the tree. Lucky for her, there was one ornament left. She kept looking at it and then looking at me. I said, “Do you want to put the ornament on the tree?” “Oh, no. No, no, no. The sisters have to go first.” “You’re a sister too,” I said. “Let’s put the ornament on the tree.” Once again, that smile

just came out of nowhere and lit up the entire room. My memories really do revolve around her smile. Ernest, thanks for your smile!

Sister Kathleen Spurlin, BVM

I'm from Ernest's set of 1946. I made a mistake. I said I thought I remembered Ernest, that she was always such a quiet person. I was soon corrected. They said, "You couldn't get a word in edgewise."

Sister Audrey Juergens

I went to summer school with Ernest every year; you know how long that took us! We went to Mt. St. Mary. She was a delight to know and I looked forward to seeing her every year. We called her Ernest Feathers. I asked her when I came to Mount Carmel, "Why did we call you Ernest Feathers?" She said, "I don't know. I thought you'd tell me."

Sister Mary Anne Bradish, BVM

My mother was a daily communicant at Holy Family Parish in Glendale. At 101, she wasn't always able to get out anymore. Ernest would look to see if Mom was at Mass. If she wasn't there, she would bring communion to my mom. I found it interesting that today is my mother's birthday and it is Ernest's getaway to heaven. Thank you, Ernest.

Sister Eileen Healy, BVM

One of the things Ernest was very proud of was her long family history in Southern California. I believe her parents were born there too. At the very least, she was a native when most people who lived in Southern California were not.

Sister Loretta Hubl, BVM

I moved to Holy Family in 1992. Ernest was always a kind person—very, very kind. She loved to talk and tell a story. When I came here to Mount Carmel, she recognized me. I went to her almost every day for a while asking her to remember things. She loved remembering. She loved remembering stories about people.

There would be days when I would go to the "Wheelchair to Brahms" program. On the way back, I would pass by the dining table on third floor Caritas and Ernest would be there. I was convinced that she couldn't see well until you reached a certain distance from her. I would wave and she didn't see me until I got closer and then she would wave back. I will always remember Ernest being a very kind, gentle woman who loved to talk. Talk your heart out in heaven, Ernest.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

My office oversees things about civic elections. The mail today brought a voter registration card for Mary Ernest. Now she already had one from the Secretary of State. I did not initiate anything with the office in the courthouse downtown. I'm just thinking that she has become politically active in ways we never thought.

Sister Jean Beste, BVM

Last Friday night, I got a call about 9 p.m. They were wondering if they should take Ernest to the hospital. I said to Sherry Jacobs, "Why should she go to the hospital? Does she have a headache?" "No." "Does she have a fever?" "No." "Does she have high or low blood pressure?" "No." "Why do they want to take her to the hospital?"

I know that Ernest always said to me, "I don't want to go to the hospital." She didn't just say it once; she'd say it 10 times. "I'm not going to the hospital. I'm not going to the hospital." I said, "Sherry, just leave her there tonight and I will talk with the nurse tomorrow morning." When I talked with the nurse, they said it was the perfect thing for her to stay here, which made me feel good.

Sister Ann Cronin, BVM

I lived for 10 years at St. Robert Bellarmine in Burbank. The stained glass picture that is in the program makes me smile. How many among us here have themselves in a stained glass window? I was looking at the photos displayed in the back. There are pictures of women I have lived with where every single person in that photo has gone to God. I know that Ernest has joined many of her southern California friends. It brought back many wonderful memories seeing some of those women's photos, whom I almost forgotten about. Thank you, Ernest, for bringing them all to mind for me.

Sister Anna Marie McKenna, BVM

Sometimes when you look at a funeral program, you know that Sister had planned it all. That was not true of Ernest. It might be nice to know that the one thing in this program that she asked for specifically was the song "How Great Thou Art." My thanks to the sisters from southern California who filled in the other holes.

Sister Diane Forster, BVM

The communion song, "A Child's Morning Prayer," some of you may remember from your elementary years. It was one of the suggestions and is on the communion part of the program. I have looked for a polite way to say this, so I mean this with the best intention. One of the songs we did not choose for this program, and you have to think of this with Ernest in heaven, is a children's song called "Chatter with the Angels."