

Kathleen M. O'Sullivan, BVM (Donall)
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, Sept. 25, 2018

Jeanette Prodgers, Dillon, Mont., Friend

For nearly 40 years, Sister Kathleen was a special mentor for me. I first met her in 1981 when I was a young new college graduate. I had just moved to Butte, Mont., right after the mines shut down. Jobs were scarce, and I was shy. At the time, she juggled multiple roles, one of which was volunteer coordinator for Highlands Hospice. We spent hundreds of hours doing hospice work together. She took me under her wing and led me to many other community activities that helped the poor and vulnerable. Kathleen had Energizer Bunny mojo and a reliable VW bug. Social justice ran deep through her veins, which I loved most about her. She was probably the kindest, most compassionate woman I have ever encountered. She had a great sense of humor that shone through those smiling Irish eyes. The one thing I never did learn from her was selling World Book Encyclopedias despite her inordinate faith in me. For her, she was a natural, although it probably didn't hurt to say: "Hello, I'm Sister Kathleen O'Sullivan" when knocking on the doors of a heavily populated Catholic community. Few in Butte could say no to her. After she left Butte, we kept in touch periodically over the years and it was always like reconnecting with an old friend. I had hoped to see her one more time before she left Missoula, but it was not to be. However, we did share a few emails after her relocation to Dubuque. We earthlings have lost a fun-loving, generous, spiritual soul.

Margaret Molloy Nelle, Omaha, Nebr., Former BVM

Kathleen O'Sullivan taught us to see the connection of Earth and Heaven, that they are one. I am so grateful. Thanks to you, Kathleen. You will live with us forever. You made a difference.

Marje Doyle

Sister Kathleen was a good friend and member of our book discussion group for well over 15 years in Missoula, Mont. Her insights were always insightful and her example was always inspiring. Her dedication to social justice issues made her a role model across the area. A new part of the journey has begun and I wish her well.

Rita Jankowska Bradley

Dear Sister Kathleen, radical sister of faith, my compatriot, wise teacher, mentor, sister in the struggle, and just plain friend. It was so touching that you found an appreciation of motherhood when you cared for our three children for a week while we were on a trip. All of our family dearly loves you and sends their love, as do so many. Our whole family and the family of humanity and the earth were well served by you. Thank you for all the joy, sorrow, strength, kindness and love in our being able to take action for peaceful solutions, known as TAPS, with you. It all makes a difference. Inspiring youth to use their scientific knowledge for peaceful purposes, rather than military might, was huge. We gave so much encouragement to students in the regional science fair, through awards for sustainable and renewable resources. We challenged the system of injustice through hunger awareness, poverty issues, support for conscientious objectors, and the beautiful letter sent by the youth to those imprisoned for their stance on human

rights, for standing against the death penalty, and for so many other causes. Thank you again for being you and for your boundless energy for so much and for so many.

Sister Marie Corr, BVM

I spent 30 years in the same city as Kathleen. Two things stood out. First, her incredible inclusivity. She would look around and notice someone on the margins. All of a sudden, he or she was connected. That was always inspirational to me. Another thing was the famous book club. Kathleen could always find the other side of an issue. At times that was very enlightening; at other times, it was very annoying. Thank you, Kathleen.

Sister Joyce Cox, BVM

I've known Kathleen since she was at St. Thomas More in San Francisco with me. She always worked so hard to the last minute to get her report cards done. I'd be waiting and waiting and waiting. She would say, "I was up until 2 o'clock in the morning, but I just couldn't decide what grade to give him or her." I teased her over the years about that. It was always fun because we always laugh about it. I would say to her every time I saw her, "Kathleen, do you have your report cards done." It was just a wonderful way the two of us enjoyed each other. Kathleen, I'll miss that and I know you are still working on your report cards.

Sister Elizabeth Olsen, BVM

Kathleen was wonderful to live with. We lived together maybe 10 years. She was in a neighboring parish that is now part of my parish. When Kathleen first came, I had broken my right rotator cuff. She had been so embedded in Butte that we always figured she was a Buttite by contamination. Kathleen had come to help me. I said to her one day, "If you ever want to move to Missoula, you can come to live with me." I was surprised that a few months later, she decided to move to Missoula. She touched as many lives there as she did in Butte. She just had that way about her. Living with her, I learned that she taught herself how to cook after she was fully retired from *paying* jobs. She would watch a lot of cooking shows and I became her victim. Usually, she did very well. Every time she went to her support group that had been meeting in Missoula since Renew had begun, Kathleen would bring them something new. If it was new, she was usually successful. If she tried to repeat a recipe, she usually wasn't very successful. She was my mentor, she was my encyclopedia, and she was my dictionary. I would have her read over any paper that I wrote and she could tell me if I got to the point or not. She is someone I will miss. I am so glad that she is with God. However, I told her in a note that I would haunt her for the eternity if she didn't wait until I got here.

Alicia

I met Kathleen when I was about 10 years old. I was going through the RCIA program and she became my sponsor at the very first session. She and I just clicked; we just took to each other. I'm almost 37 so she has been a huge part of my life. Growing up as a child and even as an adult, I would call her for her advice and ask for her wisdom. She has watched my children grow into the kids that they are. My middle child actually is named after her – Maria Kathleen. Kathleen was so tickled when I told her the name. She didn't get it at first, "Oh, that's a really pretty name." I had to reiterate "Kathleen" and then she got it. My youngest son who is almost seven has a blanket that Kathleen made. I don't know how long it took her to make it, but it was a very nice surprise to open the package and there was this bright, blue, quilted blanket. Even being

here and listening to the stories, I get the full spectrum of her life and her abilities to read people, make a difference and have an impact. She will be missed. I will miss our phone calls. By the way, she was a great chest player too. We would sit for hours playing chest, drinking coffee and having dessert. She was a very special person. I'm glad she is at peace and has made it home.

Sister Karen Conover, BVM

I served many years at St. Paul Parish in San Francisco. There is a great legacy to the BVMs. Kathleen not only went to Most Holy Redeemer and St. Paul HS, I realized that she was among the earlier people to enter. At some point, about the late 1980s, Sister Maureen O'Brien and I took the BVM Directory and highlighted all the BVMs who had entered from St. Paul Parish. At that point, it was 5% of the living membership of BVMs. Her Irish roots and her San Francisco roots are very precious. The only other contact I had with her over the many years was when she would come to region meetings on the West Coast and then the wonderful things she would jog us to think about, to try, to care for the earth. I knew from herself and others how she greatly missed the mountains. Now I am rejoicing that mountains are ever in her heart and in her being with God.

Father Jim Hogan, Missoula, Mont.

This holy woman became a holy woman because she listened. She listened to people and then spoke out of the depth of her own conviction and heart, always challenging. She often challenged me in wonderful ways. The e-mail from Rita Bradley indicates a part of Kathleen that is so important. Rita is a peace activist in Missoula, but not of the Roman Catholic household. That made no difference. Kathleen's influence stretched all across the city of Missoula and I think across Butte as well. She will continue in the hearts of many people, especially in the number of small groups that even as recently as just before her illness, she would send them directives as to what they were to discuss in their group.

Sister Dorothy (Dot) Feehan, BVM

I knew Kathleen from the way she just was present to everyone. That was a great gift she had. As she went on in life, she continued to be present to us through her wit and conversation. I will always be grateful for the good laughs we constantly had.

Sister Anne Marie McKenna, BVM

I also met Kathleen when I was about 10 years old, but I'm quite a few years older than 37! Kathleen taught me in fifth grade at St. Paul's in San Francisco. She was a great influence on my life as a teacher. Kathleen was the only teacher I had in elementary school who read to us every day. She always managed to pick books by authors who had many other books. It inspired you to follow that trail. Other than seventh grade math class, I read to my students every day while I was a teacher. In fifth grade, we had United States geography and history. Kathleen made that come alive. I don't think I would have ever thought of going as far away as New York to teach, except that since I had been in fifth grade, I always wanted to see the East Coast. I thank her for her inspiration to me as a fifth grader that led me to some wonderful place in my own teaching.