



Wake Stories of Ann Ellen Quirk, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, Sept. 28, 2018

Sister Bernadette McManigal, BVM

We've heard a lot about Ann Ellen's service, but I want to thank her for her spirit of joy. She was always ready for a party; she was always ready for an adventure. Thanks, Ann Ellen, for all the good times that we shared.

Sister Donard Collins, BVM

I'm in Ann Ellen's set, the Set of 1949. About two or three weeks ago, I was talking with Ann Ellen. We always had something to say about our postulant mistress, Helen Wright. She said, "Helen Wright said to me one time, 'Go with the flow.' I've tried to spend my life that way." She definitely did "go with the flow." When we sing "Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel," we sometimes claim that song as our set song. It was not actually our set's song. In October of 1951, Ann Ellen was told to get some new life for Mother Clarke's Day. She found, in either a piano bench or a file, a copy of "Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel." It was on old hectograph sheets, so it had been tried here before, but had never taken hold. Our set sang "Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel." Today, you will hear that again. In a very special way, thank Ann Ellen.

Sister Margaret Mary Cosgrove, BVM

I lived with Ann Ellen at Wright Hall when we were both studying at Mundelein College. Those were very tumultuous times in our congregation. Ann Ellen was a true model of what BVM life could be like. She mentored many of us, but it was her example and constant kindness to each of us that helped some of us remain in the congregation.

Sister Joyce Cox, BVM

Ann Ellen, Joan Newhart and I were very close friends for 69 years, Joan dying just six months ago. I was very ill two years ago in Seattle and it was clear that I was not going to live. Through the grace of God and all the prayers, I did live so I could come back and be with both of them. Then what did they do? They died. I've talked to both of them about this. We used to say, "We do it with ease because we do it in threes, side by side." With Ann Ellen, it was always in that spirit that we could meet in Chicago when I came from the West for something. We would meet with Joan and go to see Joan's mother, who was the funniest of the family. We kept that going over all the years no matter where we were. Ann Ellen, I always will cherish our times together, the stories you told about your wonderful family, and the heartbeat you had for so many. I'm so grateful for the years, the friendship, and a little sad that, when I got back here, the two of you left for heaven.

Charlotte Simon, Mount Carmel Nurse

I am one of the nurses who had the privilege of caring for Ann Ellen. She told me, "Make sure you tell everybody to remember me as a smiling nun, happy and content in Jesus Christ." She had a picture over her bed. I said, "What is this picture over your bed?" She said, "That's my favorite picture." I said, "Tell me more about it." She said, "It's the disciples walking along the Emmaus road with Jesus." The disciples, who didn't recognize Jesus, were saying, "Did you hear about what was going on in Jerusalem these last three days?" They didn't understand yet that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus began telling them about how Jesus Christ fulfilled the Laws and the Prophets. When it was almost evening and Jesus acted like we was going to go on. They said, "Come, come have dinner with us." They really wanted Jesus to abide with them, to stay with them. Ann Ellen reminded me that

their ears tickled; they wanted to hear more and more. In the breaking of the bread, they realized it was Jesus. They were so excited that their hearts were burning within them. I was thankful that she told me about that picture; it has more meaning for me now. I am thankful to God for making Ann Ellen and for the privilege of being with her. She built my confidence as a nurse. She wanted each of us to remember her as one who is content in Jesus Christ and is that smiling nun.

Sister Kathleen Conway, BVM

Not too long ago, I was reading a book with the line "There is no such thing as an individual apart from her relationships." Ann Ellen died before I read that so as soon as I did read it, I thought, "This is Ann Ellen for sure." My first introduction to Ann Ellen was soon after I was elected to a congregational leadership position in 2000. It was my job to get to know all the sisters and make sure they were taken care of and to facilitate the next step for them if they had any illnesses. I was new in this job as I took off for Wilmington from Chicago. I thought here is a woman who is isolated in this rural area where she probably doesn't know anybody and certainly isn't connected with any nuns. I was going to fix all that. Well, I have never so wrong in all my life. When I got there, I saw that she was deeply, deeply connected to the people of Wilmington up to the third generation. I talked to people whose grandparents had been helped by Ann Ellen. Furthermore, she had more BVM contacts than I did at that time. She was talking with Joyce on the West Coast and people here in Dubuque and all over the place. She knew more than I knew about the happenings in the BVM congregation. As I look back on my too short relationship with Ann Ellen, I feel I was drawn into her warm circle of acceptance and friendship. I know I join so many other people in that circle. Somebody said earlier that everybody felt like he or she was special when encountering Ann Ellen. She became a wisdom figure for me, a person who not only read and believed in the Gospel, but also actually lived it. I could look at a human person and see what it meant to be truly Christian. I am so grateful to her.

Sister Judy Callahan, BVM

I was Ann Ellen's neighbor for about 17 years, half of it in Romeoville and half in Kankakee, Ill., working in Hispanic ministry. It was not unusual to get a call from Ann Ellen saying "Johnson & Johnson has a semi full of stuff. Can you use it?" Of course, I would take the van, stuff it, and take it around to the different Hispanics places as well as to mentally disabled adults in Kankakee, the refuge center, and places were victims of assault found shelter. It was spread all over Kankakee and Joliet. Some people are in charge and they are very, very busy. The one thing that always impressed me was that Ann Ellen was in charge clearly, but she was a great delegator. To watch the volunteers who came in to sack up the groceries and other items, she really did turn it over to the folks there. When a volunteer would get sick or die, it was a heartbreak for her. Her love for the volunteers and their great generosity changed many people besides the poor to be more aware of their surroundings. I am grateful for her example of leadership, service and empowerment of others to serve the need of the poor.

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM

I had not known Ann Ellen until she came here in 2015. I always found her very welcoming. She gave me the jacket I have on today. People are complimenting me so I say, "Well, I wore it in memory of Ann Ellen." The last couple of months, I had the privilege of having good conversations with Ann Ellen. She was wondering why God wasn't taking her, why she couldn't die. She said, "I guess I still have something to do." I said, "Well, what do you think that is?" She said, "I think God wants me to show people how to be patient during long suffering." I guess she gets an A for that class.

Deacon Jay Plese, Wilmington, Ill.

Sister Ann Ellen was a special person. She went fishing with my wife and I about 2 ½ years ago. I said to my wife, "I'll go up and open the cabin and you and Sister can fly up." It was too long of a drive. My wife called me that morning and said, "I can't find Sister. What do you think I should do?" I said, "Don't leave. You've got to find Sister." They were both patient. Sister was in one terminal and Katrina was in another terminal, but they finally got together and flew to northern Minnesota. She was staying in a bedroom in the lower level of the house. The thermostat for the basement furnace didn't work well. She said, "Jay, it's cold up here." It was Memorial Day

weekend. I said, "Yes, I know, Sister." "You've got to turn the heat up." I turned up the heat up more upstairs to make sure she was warm downstairs. My wife and I felt like we were sleeping in a sauna that night. As soon as that vacation was over, I fixed that thermostat. She also went fishing with us – my wife and I, Sister and an uncle of mine - and caught a number of fish. She said, "You have to make sure to take a picture of these. I think I've caught the most fish and the largest." I said, "You did." There was no question in my mind. If you knew Sister well, you would never say no to her. She was like Mother Teresa; she had a way of making sure she was going to get what she set out to get. She was beautiful both in spirit and as a person.

I have many memories of her tied to life with my family. She came to Wilmington the same year my mother came to town. Two very young ladies, both starting on a different mission. My mother went on to have ten children and sister had all of us at one point or another at St. Rose elementary school. She came to many family functions throughout my lifetime. She was also at my parents' house when both passed, one then the other. She was a spiritual advisor to me for a couple of years before she returned to the Motherhouse. We met on a monthly basis. I found her to give tremendous insight and wisdom into life. You would look at a situation and ask her, "What do you think, Sister?" She would have an interesting, intellectual perspective on how to deal with people. I truly applauded her for that.

I felt very strongly about her leadership. She was a tremendously strong person. She was influential to so many in the community where I lived. She came to me one time while I was serving on the city council and said, "Jay, I want you to take up this mission." "What is it, Sister?" She said, "They are trying to expand alcohol sales in Wilmington. We have to fight this." Again, we did put up our best fight. She was a better major than most of the ones I served with, by the way. We didn't win that one, but we stood for what was right. She always stood on the right side – feed the poor; feed the hungry. When you read those verses in Scripture, it resonates how true Sister Ann Ellen was. She didn't judge people from the lowly to the highest. She knew what she needed whether it was money to feed the poor, clothes, whatever. She had a way of gleaning what was needed. Personally, I think she is a saintly person, a beautiful person. If I can accomplish just a small portion of what Sister Ann Ellen accomplished, I'll truly be a blessed man.