



Shared Memories of Maureen (Wenefride) Sheehan, BVM

Via Zoom, May 16, 2020

Sister Kate (St. Wilma) Keating, BVM

We made our first vows in 1959. After classes at Clarke University the following summer, we left for Chicago to go to the Scholasticate to attend Mundelein College. We were both in math. There were seven of us. We studied a lot together. We called ourselves the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. In our group, we had one who we knew was going to be summa cum laude, so we became companions to the summa.

Anyway, we really enjoyed being with each other. The first class we had to take was calculus. Maureen and I were across from each other. When we got our first test back, she looked at it and handed it me. I looked at her and said, "Wow! Nice going!" She got a zero on it. I gave it back to her and she looked at it again and proceeded to draw a smiley face right in that zero. She never got a zero again.

Last year was the last time I saw Maureen. She came here for a meeting but she was too sick to go to it. So I went over to the BVM Center and had a good visit with her. These last months I kept in touch with Maureen through Pat Rogers, BVM.

Maureen, now you are safe and healthier than ever. No more zeros in your life. May you smile with the joy that is due to you. May you smile with the blue sky on you. May you smile with the sunshine on your face. May you smile as the road rises up to meet you. Now you will continue to smile with the loving God forever.

Sister Diane (Joanella) O'Donnell, BVM

Maureen had lots of funny stories to tell and I'm going to steal one from her. She worked at Sts. Simon and Jude Parish for 25 years. It was a parish that was very open and welcoming. Maureen was a pastoral associate. She might as well have been a deacon because the boys—as she called them—were very open to her participation. Every week they met and went over the Sunday scripture and reflected and shared with one another. She said, "We were trying to get to the heads and hearts of the people so that they would have something to live with throughout the week." One day it was her turn to preach and she said, "I have to go see if my alb is clean." I said, "Your alb?" She said, "If the boys are dressing up so am I!" So she wore her alb.

She did marriage preparation. After one marriage preparation, a few weeks before this couple was to be married, the young woman called her sobbing. Maureen asked, "What's the matter?" "I have to see you." She came to see Maureen with the fiancé. He was Muslim [and his father] "won't walk into a Catholic church," the bride said. Maureen said, "Will he in come onto the property? Will he come to the parking lot?" His son said, "Yes." She said, "No problem. We'll get a tent. The church is a big tent, you know. Not only will we have one tent, we'll have three tents: one for the groomsmen, one for the bridesmaids, and we'll decorate the main tent beautifully. Nobody will have to come into the church to have your ceremony." What a peaceful way to solve a problem. She came up with all kinds of things like that through her ministry. Certainly, she brought much joy, hope, openness and love to all the people she served.

Sister Anne (Robertine) Kendall, BVM

When I think of Maureen, I think of her Franciscan connections—her many years at Sts. Simon and Jude and her interaction in San Francisco at St. Boniface. I believe that when she moved to the Bay area, she was on the board

of directors there. Her Franciscan connection was very dear to her. My prayer would be that we may all be Franciscans at heart reaching out to the needy around us.

Sister Mary (Mercedie) McCauley, BVM

For many of us on this Zoom call, our relationship with Maureen goes back to September 1956. We formed wonderful friendships and always appreciated every opportunity we had to get together. With Maureen in the group, we could be assured of a number of laughs. Once in a while, we also could be assured of a cutting remark that put into context was OK.

I always appreciated the opportunity to visit when Maureen came back to Mount Carmel or I was out in California. One way in which Maureen was very helpful to me was when I served as the pastoral administrator in Monona, McGregor, and Postville and she was in Southern California. She did a lot of marriage work, but in particular, she focused on annulments. In Monona, I started thinking I was going to be the queen of annulments. Everyone was coming to me for annulments and I really knew nothing about it. I would call Maureen and share the story. She would give me exact directions and exact wording. I did become the queen and got all but one to go through with the assistance of Maureen. I will always be grateful to her for that.

I recall talking to her during the last course of chemotherapy. She said, "I know what's going to happen and I'm OK with it." She was more OK than I was. She had a wonderful faith-filled, fun-filled personality. I so admired how she handled the challenges of the last couple of years. I offer a prayer of great gratitude and ask for Maureen's continued support, her wisdom, and good humor.

Sister Ann Cronin, BVM

Mine is a more bizarre story about Maureen. Whenever she came to cluster, she would get a bottle of Jameson Irish Whiskey from some woman she knew in Huntington Beach, Calif. When I lived in San Francisco, she made sure there was a bottle of Jameson's in my apartment. When she came to cluster, she would travel on public transportation and have a couple of Jamesons while there. She would always say, "I would rather drink than drive." So Dee Myers, BVM would always drive her home. A few years ago when Ann Marie Dress, BVM and I were in Ireland, we went to the Jameson distillery. There was a gigantic chandelier made out of Jameson bottles. I took a picture of that for Maureen and gave it to her. God only knows what happened to it. I got her a little Jameson glass. My story is a little more on the light side of Maureen, but I will never look at a bottle of Jameson's that I don't think of Maureen.

Sister Mary Ann (Clement Mary) Zollmann, BVM

I have two little memories: one at the very beginning of my life as a BVM, one very recently. In 1964, I was sent to Bishop Garcia Diego High School in Santa Barbara, Calif. Thank God Maureen was there. Her humor and her capacity for fun really saved my life at that time. We used to go out every night and play tennis together. I was a terrible tennis player, but we had a lot of laughs. She really taught me how to hold things lightly. That's how things started out.

Then, most recently, as is true for several of us on this call, I served with Maureen on the Governance Study Group (GSG). During much of the four years that we were applying ourselves to this task, Maureen was also going in and out of chemotherapy. Still, she was always there, she was always prepared, and, the thing I want to say, she was always herself. She came without baggage just to say what needed to be said from the truth of who she is. My two prayers for how Maureen will linger in our lives are a good sense of humor with the ability to have fun and a great sense of personal integrity.

Sister Margaret (St. Cabrini) Geraghty, BVM

I got to know Maureen during her years on the Governance Study Group (GSG) because she would stay at our house. I loved how she talked about Ireland. Her love for Ireland was so real and connected to her mom and dad and the time she spent there with them. Her roots meant a lot to her.

When I think of her now, I think of the “thin places” that Irish Celtic spirituality talks about. I feel a thin place right now between where Maureen has gone and where we are. I thank Maureen for being connected to us across that thin place. I pray that we can all be faithful to the faith that she had through her childhood that led her through the ups and downs of her life and across that thin place into a bigger reality.

Sister Dolores (Dee) Myers, BVM

I remember Maureen mostly from clusters in San Francisco. I enjoyed her because, as many of you have said, she was sharp and quick and would have funny things to say. I just enjoyed her. As Ann said, I always got to drive her back home. I never knew about those Jamesons. I would drive her from the cluster back to her apartment in Daly City, Calif., and we would talk about things. One of the things was that she was on the Governance committee at that time. She always took that very seriously. She would have a few little things to say about that. Then, just her coping with cancer. She had cancer, then she was well, and then I got cancer. She always spoke to me about the cancer thing. She had such a good attitude that I just flew through mine. I don't even remember having it because she had a much more serious form of cancer, but dealt with it so positively.

My prayer is that I'm so glad we are having this today because it seems like Maureen just disappeared out of our lives. She was never there (San Francisco) nor here (Mount Carmel). She was on her way to come here, but then she died in San Francisco, which I think would have been her choice. Thank you, Maureen.

Sister Kate Hendel, BVM

I had the good fortune of meeting Maureen—and I don't know if it was her first mission, it may have been—when I was at Xavier in Phoenix as a student in 1961. I didn't have her as a teacher, but she just had this marvelous spirit about her that she was so, so loved by all the students and really the sisters there.

Again, as Mary Ann alluded to, we had the great gift of having Maureen on the GSG. She was always nudging us to keep moving, to keep moving, in her very own way. I guess as I look at all the little pictures of each of you, I see another picture down there of Maureen looking at all of us and participating with us right now. Maybe she has a glass of Jameson; I would like to think so. Maureen, we love you and we are so grateful for the gift you were to each of us on the committee and to all the students and parishioners you served. Thank you for that gift of love.

Sister Sara (Philip Mary) McAlpin, BVM,

I was in Maureen's set and I have a lot of memories of Maureen. The one that popped into my mind when I thought about this gathering was relatively recent. Several months ago I was at Mount Carmel recovering from a broken bone and Maureen was going through another series of cancer treatment, tons of different medications, and more awareness that she needed people to help her like Pat Rogers, BVM and a lot of other people. I tried to keep in contact with her over this time. On one occasion, we were talking with each other and were really quite serious and practical in our discussion about how to get up off the toilet without some help. Actually, we both, almost simultaneously when this came to us, burst out laughing. I thought, “Well, good for us. We're cheering each other up.” I will remember that. It's not exactly a holy memory—or maybe it is a holy memory—anyhow, it was interesting. I thank God for giving Maureen some deep peace and for letting us share in her life. I pray too for all the people that she touched during full years of ministry. I feel a lot of great gratitude for all of that.

Sister Susan Coler, BVM

I didn't really know Maureen at all until we were on the GSG committee together. She certainly is a memorable personality. I was struck by how much of a rebel rouser she was even as she was fighting through chemotherapy and all sorts of things. Nothing would keep her down.

She knew her opinions and they meant a lot to her. They meant a lot to me in the sense that she was very strong in what she believed in and making sure that justice and rightness was pursued at all times. Being on that committee, in some sense, gave her the best of both worlds. She loved San Francisco but she loved being able to come back and visit with everybody because we had these meetings. It shows her affection for all of you who knew her from the beginning because I think she really treasured those opportunities to be with you. Yet, she

could still have her home base in California, which I sense really was her home. So she really did have the best of both worlds. I am grateful that she was on the committee because of what it meant to me and the rest of the group and for giving her the opportunity to be part of the bigger community that she loved, but still be in the home that meant a lot to her. I am grateful for the opportunity to get to know her over those long four years of GSG.

Sister Joanne Marie (Michael Mary) Lucid, BVM

This is such a beautiful service and way of remembering Maureen. I want to thank all of you for that. It has been an ache for me during this waiting period. You helped me with all these remembrances. We went to high school together. Almost every day after school, we would go to Johnny's. I think Annie Cronin knows what Johnny's is. It was a soda fountain type place at the end of Church Street. We were part of a little gang at St. Paul's. We thought we were really tough. We would all gather there to laugh, tell stories, and smoke cigarettes and have fun until the Sisters at the school caught on to us.

There were so many times when she would have a serious moment about what she believed or how she felt about things. I appreciated that. When I was ill, I had the nicest surprise when she called me one evening while I was in the hospital. She told me all about—in detail, I want you to know—the crowning of the new archbishop in San Francisco. It was so hilarious! I had to laugh and laugh and laugh out loud. The nurses came and asked, “What is going on?” I said, “I only wish you could all hear about this.” It was a description that was perfect Maureen to the detail. I could picture it all. So we laughed and laughed. I am grateful for that time she chose to call me and appreciate it now. Again, thank you so much for doing this.

Sister Patricia Bombard, BVM

I was on the GSG with Maureen. I do believe that it was at least my second time serving on a governance committee with Maureen. I don't have any ministry with her, but I did serve on those committees with her and got to know her a little bit through that.

I agree with and affirm everything that has been said about her already. As I was thinking about this service, I wanted to be a part of it mostly to hear your stories of Maureen and not really sure what I was going to say. One of the things that I have been doing during this time of COVID isolating is cooking more than what I used to have time for. So I have been going through all the recipe books. Just this past week, I came across a sheet of paper that says “Chili Recipe from Sister Maureen Sheehan, BVM.” I don't know whether we were collecting recipes, but I thought that it was a departure from the Governance Study woman that I knew. It starts with a little note that says “Season's Greetings. In the spirit of the season, I have a recipe to share. I haven't tried the Neiman Marcus cookies yet, but I have another top-secret Neiman Marcus recipe for the best chili ever. I don't know if anyone paid for this. I believe that it was stolen by a former Neiman Marcus employee. Several years ago this recipe won me \$100 in our school's chili cook-off.” Then she lists the recipe and then she writes, “Happy Christmas to all. Maureen. If anybody wants a copy of the chili recipe, I'll be happy to send it to you.” I pray that Maureen is enjoying some great Neiman Marcus chili along with her Jameson.

Sister Elizabeth Avalos, BVM

My story about Maureen is about when I was a freshman and she was a senior in high school, she and Joanne Lucid. I did not know about that gang going to Johnny's. I remember all us freshman year looking up to the seniors, as was typical. I was just so surprised when both she and Joanne decided to enter the BVMs. I kept wondering, “What is this little story that they are doing?” That's how I remember Maureen—someone to look up to. The rest of her life seems to be one that was very amazing.

Sister Joanne Marie (Michael Mary) Lucid, BVM

This story is the day we left on the train the Southern Pacific. All our buddies, about 10 to 12 girls, from Johnny's came down. We got on the train. We were crying because we said goodbye to our parents. I know I was crying very hard. We looked out the window as the train started to take off. We were waving to them. Our friends were crying and waving back. One man on the train didn't know what was going on so he pulled the emergency stop.

The conductor came and said, "What's going on here?" That was our take-off from San Francisco. It caused a little rumble.

Sister Diane O'Donnell, BVM

I want to go back to the Jamesons. There was a woman from Sts. Simon and Jude who flew up to San Francisco once a month to see Maureen. Maureen was very helpful to this woman so she brought Maureen this big bottle of Jameson. At one point, as Maureen was getting more ill, she said to me, "Now listen, if anything ever happens to me, be sure to call my nephews and get this out of the house before anybody else sees it."

Another story is about when they were trying different treatments on her. The radiologist decided to shoot some gold chips into one of her organs. I knew she was going to have some kind of treatment. She called me and said, "I want you to know my value has gone up." I said, "Really?" "I've got gold chips in me and when I die be sure to get them out. They might be worth something." Again, her humor, both to help me and probably herself through the realization of what was happening. Yet, she accepted it.

Sister Bernadette (Lucinus) McManigal, BVM

As another member of the GSG, I got to know Maureen through our work there. I don't want to repeat what the others have said. What I always appreciated about Maureen was both her light touch and her clear thinking. Those two qualities made her very unique and a valued member of the group. My prayer is to ask Maureen to help us with both of those—a light touch on life and very clear thinking as we move into the future, a future that she has already moved into.

Sister Regina M. Qualls, BVM

This will be the last GSG story, which is how I really came to know Maureen. One of the things that Maureen told us that I just thought was really funny was that she had been agitating for quite some time with various members of different leadership teams, I guess, that we really needed to do something about our governance and we really needed to get something going. I guess in her own inimitable way she did that agitating. She felt, and she said this several times, that that was her reward to be placed on the governance committee for four years. She was expecting them to put her money where her mouth was. As everyone said, and Bernadette said it so well, she had that light touch and clear thinking and she was so honest. I always appreciated her honesty. She would get very agitated because she was so passionate about a topic. When she finished, there was always a twinkle in her eye.

Sister Bette (Esther Mary) Gambonini, BVM

I was regional [representative] when Maureen was down in the Los Angeles area. She was a very private person. My memory is about when she moved up to Daly City. Every summer I would have a 4th of July barbeque at the house. Pat Rogers, BVM and Eileen Ramos, for the most part, would drive her down here. We would have a wonderful barbeque outside enjoying the company of associates and various friends from the San Francisco area. We would be out in the carport area. I just remember that Maureen wouldn't say a lot, but she was there. She always brought her life and her stories. I pray that we as BVMs who like to party can continue to party as we go through these days ahead of uncertainty, unknowing of what the future will be and when we can actually get out and party together.

Sister Marilyn (Claudia Mary) Wilson, BVM

I did know Maureen but more at a distance down in LA and even up here in San Francisco. I guess the one thing that stays with me is her phrase, "Wherever a BVM is, I am." Her work in the parish, her feminist stance, her work with the poor in San Francisco. When I would see her at Bette's party or at a group discussion, she always had something direct and clear to say. I want to pray for the gift that she was, her dedication and service to the poor and parishes, and her wonderful contributions of being on community committees. Thank you, Maureen, for sharing your gifts with all of us in many different ways.

Sister Mary (Loras) Martens, BVM

The GSG stories of Maureen have been wonderful. So have the long-ago stories from people who are in Maureen's set. I got to know Maureen through the Community Board meetings when the two of us were both on the old-time Community Board that met three times a year. Maureen would fly in from San Francisco. I lived in Oak Park, Ill., at that point, back in Chicago after being in Los Angeles for a period of years. I would drive out to O'Hare and pick her up. She stayed at our house.

What everybody is saying about her sense of humor is the thing I remember best. She was a breath of fresh air. She brought something of California back to the Chicago area. We would drive to Dubuque the next day for the meetings and do the trip in reverse as she headed back to California. My prayer is that, given Maureen's long life in terms of BVM governance and a couple of different capacities, as we are working in the latest iteration of BVM governance, which involves the Assembly in its role in leading and decision making in terms of the congregation, that Maureen's wisdom and her honesty will continue to lead us in a good direction.

Sister Mary Agnes O'Connor, BVM

I do have to agree with every shared memory that each one of you have said so far. You can tell I am having a hard time because Maureen is so deep within me. She was a blessing to all of us. My prayer is that she continues to bless us to live the deep community life that we have already started. Thank you to the planners: Bette, Marilyn, Marguerite. This has been wonderful.

Sister Marguerite (John) Murphy, BVM

I grew up a few years behind Elizabeth, Josie, and Maureen, but the three of us—Josie, Maureen and myself—grew up in Irish households. Annie Cronin, too. I'm seeing your reaction on the screen. There were cultures that were passed on. One little thing is that I always cut green beans with a French cutter. People would laugh at me as say, "Why are you French cutting these green beans? You can buy them that way." It was because we always grew up French cutting our beans. I don't know about your mom, Annie, but many of our moms worked as maids when they first came over from Ireland because they needed money to live on. All of the wealthy ladies wanted their food done just right, so they taught our moms how to do things. One day, Maureen said, "I've got one of those things at home." She was the first person I met in the community who knew what a French cutter was or grew up with that. From then on, we talked about funny little stories about the Irish there.

It was quite a strong community when we were going to St. Paul's. In fact, it was absurd because there would be a line down the middle of the playground and we would play the Irish against the world. A thousand kids in the school, but we were so bold, and that was in grade school! I never was a sports person, but we would just be there going, "Fight, fight, kill!" Something you would never want to have happening in your school today.

The Irish culture was very strong. They would have picnics and all of us who went to step dance in school got to dance at all the different picnics. All through the summer, the different counties would have their own picnic. We grew up in San Francisco; we had San Francisco culture, but we had this subculture of Irish homes.

I would like to pray that we could all learn from Maureen that when Maureen was against or upset about something, she would tell you exactly how it was. She was the last one I would call when she was in the Jewish home last fall. Her roommate had the television all night long at the highest volume and telephone calls all day long. It was a very noisy environment and Maureen needed her rest. She would take up our whole phone call telling me how bad things were.

In all the years that I have known Maureen and worked with her, and even before when she would just come with her first bout of cancer to our cluster, she never complained about the illness. She never complained about the pain. When the pain got bad, you would see a grimace. There was never a vocalization about how hard it was to have pain in her life. I find that so amazing. To rise above and accept the illness and move forward with life. I pray that if or when we have something major and difficult to hold, that we can learn to live with that illness.

Sister Diane (Joanella) O'Donnell, BVM

I don't want to cut this off, but I want to read something that her niece Mechelle Sheehan sent to me after Maureen died. She wrote, "I certainly miss Maureen's friendship, her calls, her wit, her CNN updates, her telling me that everything is fine. I want to thank you and the entire BVM community for the love, prayers, and communication to me and the Sheehan clan." This niece was really Maureen's guardian angel, her help through all the illness. She's a nurse at the hospital where Maureen was. She knew the doctors so she got the whole download. If I really wanted to know what was happening with Maureen, I would call Mechelle. Maureen never knew that. Maureen would say, "Everything's fine." I just wanted to share that with you and how much Mechelle appreciated Maureen in her life.

Sister Anne (Robertine) Kendall, BVM

I got a similar note from Mechelle.

Sister Marguerite (John) Murphy, BVM.

There are five nephews and Mechelle is John's wife. Maureen really moved to San Francisco to spend some time with them.

Patricia Bernhold, former BVM

The death of any set member, or former teacher, or BVM friend, is painful but Paulites (*Alums, St. Paul HS, San Francisco*) have a special connection. Although Maureen was behind me in school, she, Joanne Lucid, and I entered at the same time. I will miss her sharp wit and Irish smile but I know she's with us now, watching over us with the countless BVMs we have lost in the past few years. Rest in peace, Maureen, and keep us on the right path.