



**Sharing of Memories of Kathleen (Johnine) McGrath, BVM**  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Sept. 2, 2021

**Mary McCauley, BVM**

It was my joy and privilege to know Kathleen for the last 65 years. We met when I entered the Congregation in 1956, but it wasn't until I was asked to serve as the administrator of Marian Hall in 1980 that I really got to know, love, and admire her. At the time she served as the Food Service Director for Marian Hall. Believe me, she knew much more about serving as the Director of the Dietary Department than I knew about administering a nursing home. And it was here that I discovered Kathleen's kindness, understanding, humor, and love. Kathleen welcomed me warmly to Marian Hall and did all in her power to assist me to be at ease. As the Food Service Director, Kathleen's true spirit was most evident—evident in her kindness to our Sisters and to the members of the Dietary staff. She was loved and appreciated by all!

Kathleen and I also had the privilege of sharing an immigration immersion experience at the border in Nogales, Ariz., and Mexico. It was here that I witnessed a woman intensely concerned and committed to our immigrant brothers and sisters.

I do believe that Kathleen's most satisfying ministry occurred during the years she served as the Director of the Catholic Charities support center in Santa Rosa. This ministry gave her an opportunity to feed the hungry and offer housing to the homeless.

I call Kathleen a Mathew 25 woman. Her life was focused on feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, visiting the sick, and offering presence to the dying. And then there was the last month of her life when many of us observed a woman of unparalleled strength—a woman with great trust in God and admirable acceptance of a very serious medical diagnosis. For the privilege of journeying with her during the last three weeks of her life and for the opportunity to be with her sister Eileen and her cousin Kitty during the last few hours of her life, I shall always be grateful.

**Julie O'Neill, BVM**

When one reads the list of locations in which Kathleen ministered, one might miss the naming of the Family Shelter in Santa Rosa, Calif. That small, one-story building was a former hospital and certainly would not have won any prize as an historic building! But, Kathleen worked magic in that building!

For a number of years, she transformed it into a true home for mothers and children! I visited the site on several occasions and was ever amazed at what I saw and heard! There, she fed them nourishing meals but much more importantly she inspired them with loving doses of self-confidence!

Residents cared for themselves and each other. They created under her guidance nutritious meals with food many times received from neighboring restaurants. In addition, she supervised the making of some 90+ bag lunches each day for the residents to carry to work and school.

Her ability to support self-confidence was so remarkable that when she moved into another position in the diocese, one of the residents was able to take her place as coordinator of the Family Shelter. Indeed, Kathleen's legacy lives on in the minds and hearts of all whom she touched in that most special place!

**Ann Huber, friend**

Jesus tells us that “No one has greater love than this, than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13)

This describes my friend Kathleen and her treatment of all people. How often she gave her time, care, and selflessness to help others—family, friends, or ones she did not even know. An example of this is: After she “retired,” she did volunteer work at the hospital sitting with dying patients who had no family or friends to be with them. Kathleen always responded to this call and often patients took their last breath in her presence. I know it was because of her peacefulness, calmness, and prayers for them.

She gave me this blessing one day and said it was one of her favorites so I think she would have it for all of us now:

May the road of God’s kingdom rise to meet you.  
May the wind of God’s grace be behind you.  
May the sun of God’s love shine warmly on you.  
May the rain of God’s mercy fall softly on your shoulders.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of His Hand.

**Mary Ann Lenahan, BVM**

Kathleen was my good friend for many years. She was a hard worker, a generous soul, a woman of many talents! I know others are going to share how she used those talents in their memories. She was dedicated to her people at the Catholic Charities Family Support Center as well as to the parishioners of St. Joseph’s Parish, her family and friends.

To me, Kathleen’s quiet unassuming manner was most comforting as we often traveled back and forth to occasions in San Francisco. I would ask, “Are we going?” Kathleen’s response would be, “It’s on my calendar.” That said it all!

Something beautiful about Kathleen that I admired was her integrity, compassion, and manner in which she respected the dignity of each person. I would observe that always in regard to her dealings with people at The Family Support Center in Santa Rosa.

We shared many good times together, always laughing about something or other, and I am truly grateful for her presence in my life. I salute you, Kathleen! I know God and Mary Frances Clarke have greeted you with, “Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the Joy of the Lord.” You’ve Made It!!!

**Georgette Parry, friend**

Sister Kathleen lived approximately 20 years in Sonoma County and served as extraordinary Eucharistic minister at St. Joseph Church, Cotati, Calif. She also worked and volunteered at Catholic Charities and their Family Support Center in Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County Food Bank and Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital.

She supported our St. Joseph Giving Tree project, coordinating names of many people in shelters and in need to provide them with clothes, gifts, and gift cards at Christmas and throughout the year. She also promoted programs for food, clothes, and shelter for refugees from other countries. Our St. Joseph Men’s Club have named two college scholarships in her honor for her support of youth.

Her support of the Sonoma County Food Bank outreach for people facing hunger was astounding. She encouraged others to help her pack up bags and boxes of food. She delivered them herself, weekly, throughout the county in a truck.

Sister Kathleen was a woman of integrity, great faith, humility, and influence. She respected everyone she met and served all in need with respectful human dignity. She had a great sense of humor and all her book club members enjoyed her friendship. Sister Kathleen's kindness was characteristic of a life spent sharing God's love and goodness with each person she met. We will miss her beautiful soul but know she is a treasured angel in heaven.

#### **Lynn Winsor, BVM**

As novices and summer workers while under temporary vows, several of us would grace Kathleen with our presence in the afternoons. In the Dubuque summer heat, we would stop by the Marian Hall kitchen to beseech Kathleen for a cool drink and tasty treats. She always had a supply of freshly baked cookies ready for us, plus she had something we could not get at the Motherhouse: Coca Cola. Kathleen's warm, gracious, and welcoming manner helped end our workday in a positive, friendly, and uplifting way, which was so typical of the way she lived her BVM life.

#### **Rebecca Kendall, friend**

Sister Kathleen was a rock at Catholic Charities' shelter for families experiencing homelessness. I'll never forget the story of how Sister Kathleen worked over the course of years with one particular family, supporting them and guiding them each time they struggled to stay on their own feet, until finally it "stuck" and they were able to maintain their housing from that point forward. She recognized that each person's journey is unique, and God calls us to walk that journey patiently, supporting people on their path. She did that with such calm grace and kindness, and she will always be remembered by those whose lives she touched.

#### **Carol Kempton, friend**

I will always remember all of the good times going to the Giants games, bunco, and our book club. She was my boss at the Family Support Center as well as a good friend and a shoulder to cry on when needed. I will miss you always, Kathleen.

#### **Dae McBride Hannah, former BVM**

My friendship with Sister Kathleen began when she was sent to Marian Hall to work with SM Joel Kramer in the Dietary Department. We were only two sets apart so we knew each other a little. Through those years of shared living, working, playing, and praying together, we became close friends along with SM Joel, Sister Rita Mary Benz, and SM Thomasette Connolly. After we all went our separate ways we kept in touch.

Being a part of Marian Hall was different than any other mission in the community where you are so close to those preparing for their next most important mission. It was a joyous place and Kathleen was a huge part of that joy, love, and sharing. She was so loved by all of us along with her employees, friends, and anyone who she touched. She was always there doing her job, finding people who needed that little extra boost or time to talk. Kathleen was one of the most selfless, other-centered persons I've known. She will be so missed by us all. Her service, her smile, her fun side, her holiness, and her BVM spirit. How lucky I was to have known her. Safely home, dear friend!

♪♪I'll take you home again Kathleen, to where your heart will feel no pain, and when the fields are fresh and green, I will take you to your home Kathleen.♪♪

#### **Diane Forster, BVM**

This is one example of Kathleen's kindness and care for all while she was Food Service Director at Marian Hall.

During a Sunday morning break with BVM staff and summer volunteers in the Marian Hall dining room, Sister Mary Cassian, a resident, came in to the dining room. Needing help in remembering things, she asked, "What time is Mass today?" and "Have I had breakfast this morning?"

Kathleen replied to both questions: "Mass will be at 10:30, Sister," and, "Did you come down for breakfast earlier?" Sister Mary Cassian could not recall coming to breakfast. Kathleen asked, "Sister, are you hungry? Would you like something to eat?"

Cassian, who may have weighed 90 pounds max, said, "Well, yes, I could eat something." So Kathleen went to the kitchen and brought Cassian a full Sunday breakfast. She thanked Kathleen, enjoyed every bite of it, and was delighted to have the company of all the staff at the table. No one ever knew whether it was her first or second breakfast.