

October 17, 2009

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family and Friends,

Sister Elaine Sullivan died peacefully at 3:40 p.m. on Tuesday October 6, 2009, at Holy Family Health Care Center, Victory Noll. Sister Fidelis Roels was at her bedside. Sister Elaine was 100 years old. Sister Elaine had suffered a stroke the week before and was being cared for by Hospice and our nursing staff. Elaine's wishes were to remain in her room at Victory Noll to await God's call from her familiar surroundings.



Sister Elaine was born in Independence, Kansas on April 15, 1909 to Charles and Catherine Wickens Sullivan. Her parents preceded her in death. She also had one brother Robert John Sullivan and two sisters Marie Sullivan and Kathleen Chrisman. All preceded her in death.

Sister Elaine entered the Congregation on September 2, 1931. She made her First Vows on September 8, 1934 and Perpetual Vows on August 5, 1940, in Redlands, Calif. She served in the missions in New Mexico, California, Texas, Indiana, Ohio, and Arizona. Elaine shares that she taught in a one-room school outside of De Queen, Ark., after graduating from high school. She had been thinking about a religious vocation and was drawn to Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, learning of their ministry serving the poor and oppressed in a personal non-institutional way. With the permission of her parents, she entered Victory Noll in 1931 when the Community was only nine years old. Elaine was truly one of our pioneer sisters who left all to follow Jesus. Sister Elaine devoted herself to Catechetical and Pastoral Ministry. She was known for her friendliness and encouragement of people in the development of the gifts God had given them. One story is told of Elaine visiting a lady who had no outside work and spent her time keeping her house immaculate by constantly cleaning windows, walls, floors etc. Elaine spent time talking with her and discovered she had secretarial gifts. Before the visit was over the woman was committed to become the Parish Secretary. Through her words of encouragement, Elaine empowered this woman to become an efficient secretary and find new meaning in her life. In New Mexico, Elaine worked with Father Michael O'Brien in instructing a large group of couples who wanted to have the blessing of the church on their marriages. When they were prepared, Father Michael and Elaine decided to have a group ceremony. All the couples gathered in the Church and each had their marriage blessed during a festive ceremony. Later the Archdiocese adopted this practice. Sister Elaine's ministry was to touch people with God's love and to teach them to live the gospel message and serve God in their daily lives.

After 64 years in the missions, Sister Elaine retired to Victory Noll in 1999. She continued to take an active part in community life and was always interested in what was happening in the lives of our sisters. Even when she needed to be in a wheelchair she wanted to be able to get around to visit the sisters and to be more independent. Therefore, she requested sport shoes like the nurses wear in order to walk in the wheelchair and not have to depend on someone to push her. This was just before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and her wish was granted. Sister Elaine's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday was a joyful celebration. Several sisters sat with her at a beautifully decorated table in the dining room. She was so happy because she received 100 birthday cards including one special one from President Obama and Michelle.

At the Vigil on Thursday evening, Sisters and Family shared about Sister Elaine's deep sense of community, her kind and considerate spirit, and her positive and helpful attitude.

Sister Martha shared that when she stayed at Holy Family 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for a period of time, Sister Elaine made every effort to make this a positive experience for Martha. She saw Elaine as a positive role model. Sister

Melanie shared that Elaine enjoyed playing Scrabble and was very good at it ... beating Melanie most of the time. Finally Melanie asked if they could discontinue keeping score. Sister Elaine graciously agreed. Sister Alodia shared her favorite story about Sister Elaine. In the 1930's while living on the family farm, Elaine told her brother about her desire to be a Sister. Her brother told her he thought her parents needed her help on the farm and to remain home. Elaine's mother was in the next room and heard the conversation. She said to Elaine, you go ahead, follow your dreams, Dad and I will do just fine. So Helen Sullivan joined Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters and became Sister Elaine. Lynn Herman, Elaine's cousin shared how Elaine would come and visit the family when she came to Victory Noll from the missions. Lynn was impressed how Elaine always remembered the names of family members and would call each by name. Lynn also shared that she received a beautiful letter from Elaine last Christmas. She said Elaine cared about people and tried to make everyone feel special. Gloria, another cousin, said her visits with Elaine at Victory Noll were special times for her to be with Elaine before God took her home. Sister Dorothy Anne said Elaine's presence and witness were very special when Elaine would sit with the very ill and dying sisters at Victory Noll.

On Friday October 9, 2009 we celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial. Members of Sister Elaine's family were present. Her niece, Elise Mannion from Houston, Tex., her niece Colleen Byars, from Castroville, Tex., her cousin Gloria Lamper, from Anderson, Ohio, and her cousins once removed, Gloria's son Henry Lamper and his wife Mary Lamper from Anderson, Ohio, and Lynn Herman and her husband Jack Herman from Hendersonville, Tenn. After the sprinkling with Holy Water, Elise Mannion and Colleen Byars placed the Pall on the casket and Lynn Herman placed the Crucifix. The first reading from Isaiah 52: 7-10 was proclaimed by Jack Herman. During the homily, Father Fahey said that Sister Elaine was proud of her name Sullivan, the name of Irish kings. He said she was a descendent of Kings. Father also referred to the call of the first four disciples from the Gospel of Matthew proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word. He said like the apostles, Elaine heard the call, left everything and followed Jesus. She went to help build God's Kingdom. It was a great challenge; she gave her life and persevered to the end. Then Father Fahey referred to a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

*"Earth's crammed with heaven  
and every common bush afire with God  
but only he who sees takes off his shoes.  
The rest sit around and pluck blackberries."*

Father said, Sister Elaine didn't sit around and pluck blackberries. She was determined to do great things for God. God knocked at Sister's heart, she responded and her life produced much fruit.

After the Mass on a rainy day those who were able processed to the cemetery, where we laid Sister Elaine to rest with the final prayers, blessing of the casket, and the singing of the hymn to Our Lady of Victory, "We have a Holy Mother." A delicious dinner to celebrate Elaine's life followed.

Thank you Elaine for your faithfulness in following God's call. We rejoice with you in your victory. The one you have loved has called you home; we will always remember you and ask that you pray for us.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Sister Betty Anderson, O.L.V.M.*

Sister Elizabeth Anderson, O.L.V.M.

*General Secretary*