

SISTER MARY ELEANOR DUNNING OSF

1922-2011

Sister Mary Eleanor was born on February 25, 1922, in Williamstown, Missouri, the second of six children of Thomas and Lottie (Schmid) Dunning. She was baptized Frances Louise on April 16, 1922, at St. Michael Church in Kahoka, Missouri. She had three brothers, Joseph, Thomas, Jr. and Richard; and two sisters, Mary and Doris. Doris lives in Kahoka. The other family members are deceased.



Frances Louise attended Clark County, Missouri, Elementary School and graduated from St. Patrick High School in St. Patrick, Missouri in 1940.

She entered the congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis at Mount St. Clare Convent, Clinton, Iowa, on September 6, 1941, and received the name Mary Eleanor at her reception on June 20, 1942. She made her first profession on August 12, 1944, and her final profession on August 12, 1947. Her novitiate classmate was Sister Pauline Logsdon.

Sister Eleanor entered nurse's training at Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, Burlington, Iowa, and received her R. N. in 1949. She graduated from Mount St. Clare College in 1952 and received a B. A. in elementary education at Viterbo College, LaCrosse, Wisconsin in 1960. She held an Iowa Elementary Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate and an Iowa Nursing Certificate.

Sister Eleanor's 51 years of active ministry included both teaching and nursing. Most recently from 1987 until her retirement, she was in Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahama Islands, as teacher and librarian at Mary, Star of the Sea School. Together with two other Clinton Franciscans, she had opened the school in 1960 and served as principal until 1963.

She also had taught at St. Patrick's in Clinton, and St. Gerald's in Oak Lawn, Illinois, as well as serving at Mount St. Clare College as house mother and nurse at Durham Hall; and as nurse at Mercy Hospital, Burlington, Iowa; at Grinnell General Hospital where she opened a coronary care unit in 1970; at Mount Alverno for the Aged, and at Mercy Hospital, both in Clinton.

Sister Eleanor retired at The Canticle in 1999. While at The Canticle, she also volunteered as a Religious Education teacher and Eucharistic Minister for Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace Parish, visiting the sick at the hospital and at The Alverno, and she served as spiritual advisor to the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Immaculate Conception/St. Patrick parishes, Fulton/Albany, Ill.

She died May 30, 2011 at Mercy Medical Center, Clinton, Iowa.

Services for Sister Mary Eleanor Dunning at The Canticle

WAKE Thursday, June 2, 2011

4:00 P.M. – Rosary; 6:30 P.M. – Scripture Service

MASS Friday, June 3, 2011, 10:00 A.M., Rev. James Keenan, president

BURIAL St. Irenaeus Cemetery, Clinton, Iowa



Sister Mary Eleanor and Sister Mary Carmella Cahill worked together at St. Francis Hospital in Grinnell and also collaborated on their art work.



Sister Eleanor was renowned for her ceramic work. The congregation often "commissioned" her to create gifts for special occasions.

Wake Reflection for Sister Eleanor Dunning

Taken from: Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi, Franciscan Press, Quincy, Ill., © 1996

and: This Living Mirror: Reflections on Clare of Assisi, Sister Frances Teresa OSC, Orbis Books, Maryknoll Press, © 1995

Francis said, quite truly, that having a special place for prayer was a help because we are so vulnerable to distraction.... In reality, there are no distractions for a God who is everywhere, so we can afford to let every by-way wind back to its true beginning, and every straying thought become a window on to God. The clear message of the Incarnate Christ is that all human life is material for discussion with the Lover of all that lives.

The second simple aid to prayer is to give it time: to spend regular time doing it, as well as to allow time for the cumulative effects of prayer to reveal themselves Wounds, tiredness, reasons for thanksgiving, signs of God at work in our lives, things we are worried about, trivial and major, matters for which we need even more help or forgiveness, areas of disaster, the anguish of human life - all are the raw material of prayer. Francis used to ask the Lord quite practical things about what would be good for his new Order, or what he should do in this or that situation, but the heart of prayer was always his worship of God; the other was but prologue.

It was one of Clare's key ideas that because of the incarnation, because God had become human in Christ, our union with God is not only bound to be fruitful, but our fruitfulness, like that of Christ, is for now, for this world. It is not something we vaguely hope for in another life.... For her, our task and our glory are to bear Christ in the present moment, with all the consequences of transformation which will follow.

Clare was very conscious of God's working and our participation in that work. She speaks in her Rule about the sisters to whom the Lord has given the grace of working. And she means – the work or service of Jesus Christ, which takes all sorts of mundane and practical forms. The span of Clare's thought, like the span of God's work, runs from creation to the washing up. Nothing is too great or too small. This is the service into which we are called when we are invited to share in his passion and death for the redemption of all. This is what doing a service to Jesus Christ means, and in a single, powerful sentence, Clare links our service with the burning longings of Christ when she writes:

“Be strengthened in the holy service which has been begun by the burning longing of the poor and crucified one.”



Sister Jeanine Bradford, Sister Mary Eleanor and Sister Mary Francis Burke left to serve in the Bahamas in 1965.



Sister Mary Eleanor, first principal of Mary, Star of the Sea School in the Bahamas with Sister Mary Francis Burke, Sister Mary Paul Hummer and Sister Jeanine Bradford who taught there.



You are my hope, O Lord.

In you, O Lord, I take
refuge;

let me never be put to
shame.

In your justice rescue me and
deliver me;

incline your ear to me and
save me.

Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me
safety,
for you are my rock and
my fortress.

For you are my hope, O
Lord;
my trust, O God, from my
youth.

On you I depend from birth;
from my mother's womb
you are my strength;
constant has been my
hope in you.

My mouth shall be filled
with your praise,
with your glory day by
day.

I will always hope
and praise you ever more
and more.