
O B I T U A R Y

Sister Mary Ellen Harnett, OP

(S. Maura Daniel)

In the gentle stillness of the early hours of the morning of October 28, 2024, our dear Sister Mary Ellen Harnett passed into the loving and welcoming embrace of her God. Sr. Mary Ellen was 85 years of age and had been a Sister of St. Dominic of Amityville for 67 years.

On July 23, 1939, Irish-born Daniel and Mary (Ryan) Harnett joyfully welcomed their first daughter Mary Ellen into their home in Manhattan, NY. As the family moved from the big City out to Queens, NY, they grew to include Margaret, Donald, Jack, Kathleen, and Dennis. They were a close-knit family who enjoyed being together and were proud of their Irish heritage. Their long-time home was in Bellaire, Queens. Mary Ellen graduated from Bishop McDonnell High School in Brooklyn in 1957 where she was taught by the Dominican Sisters.

On September 7, 1957, Mary Ellen entered the Novitiate of the Dominican Sisters of Amityville from Incarnation Parish in Queens. On August 4, 1958, Mary Ellen received the habit and her religious name, Sister Maura Daniel. The young women in her "set" were collectively known as the Golden Roses. She professed First Vows on August 7, 1959 and Final Vows on August 7, 1962.

Mary Ellen received a Bachelor of Arts from St. John's University, Jamaica, NY and a Master of Arts from Hunter College in Manhattan. She later received a Master of Divinity from Immaculate Conception Seminary, Darlington, New Jersey through



"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

- John 14:27

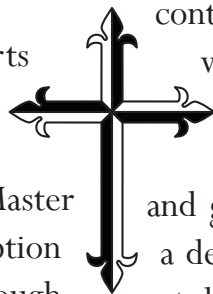
Seton Hall University, NJ.

Mary Ellen began her long ministry as an educator in the Diocese of Brooklyn in 1959 at St. Bartholomew's School, Elmhurst, Queens. She continued as a teacher in Corpus Christi School, Woodside and in Fourteen Holy Martyrs School in Brooklyn. She returned to St. Bartholomew's School as Principal in 1970, and in 1974 became Principal in American Martyrs School in Bayside, Queens, NY.

Always a grounded and reflective spiritual person, Mary Ellen felt called to transition her ministry from elementary education to pastoral care.

In this new ministry, Mary Ellen worked in St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Glen Head, NY from 1980 to 1986 and in 1986 began her twenty-year position serving as Parish Outreach Coordinator in St. Aidan Parish, Williston Park, NY. She retired in 2007 but went on to volunteer in the Queen of the Rosary Motherhouse Finance Office assisting as Entitlement Coordinator. In 2015 Mary Ellen retired again and moved to live in the Motherhouse in Amityville.

Mary Ellen's quiet and gentle personality contributed to her love of learning. If there were a course or lecture being offered, Mary Ellen was interested in attending. The Dominican pillar of study energized her and gave her life. She had a great ability to be a deep thinker and to let her learning resonate at deeper levels. Her close friends would enjoy



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inspiring conversations with her about theology or politics. Sr. Peggy Tully said that Mary Ellen was a humble intellectual, and she was always inspired by Mary Ellen's perceptions and insights which she could share so clearly. Being an avid reader, Mary Ellen kept herself current on so many issues of the day.

All of Mary Ellen's friends agree that this quiet, reflective woman was a gifted listener. One sister noted that you knew Mary Ellen was listening and heard you; you could see it; she heard you with her body, mind and spirit. Mary Ellen's responses were insightful and were carried away thoughtfully.

During her year of formation Sr. Laura Arvin lived with Mary Ellen and found her to be such a patient listener and wise guide as Laura moved through her first years in community. She commented that "you could always be yourself with Mary Ellen; she held no expectations." Laura said they had a memorable and faith-filled journey to Lourdes together in 1999, both praising God for the miracle of Mary Ellen's recovery and remission after a cancer diagnosis.

Sr. Laura Helbig said she and Mary Ellen had been friends for 63 years. From novitiate days through their first mission assignment in St. Bartholomew's in Elmhurst, they became lifelong friends. As young sisters they always seemed to be paired, first for refectory duties and cleaning and then on to chapel charges in this large convent. Laura remembers Mary Ellen as a quiet but good worker who made chores easier. Years later, Laura and Mary Ellen met often in St. Aiden's where Laura lived, and Mary Ellen ministered. Laura spoke of how Mary Ellen served faithfully and patiently with a style all her own. She was a facilitator; once she was aware of a person's need, she was able to

connect the person with just the right person or service.

Everyone knew that Mary Ellen loved to read and would always be looking for suggestions for new books. She would also give recommendations to others of good stories she had read. She made weekly visits to the Manhasset Library, and it was there that she noticed an upcoming class on how to play Bridge. She signed up. She and the others in the class formed their own Bridge Club, and those sessions became an important part of her lived outreach and opportunity for preaching.

Annual vacations and retreats were always by the sea; Mary Ellen loved the ocean. A week away out east on Long Island's south shore with friends and good books always refreshed Mary Ellen's spirit.

Diminishing health made Mary Ellen's last years long and difficult, but her patience and great love and trust of God sustained her. She became so ready to hear God's call to her, and so when it came in the quiet of early morning, she was surely filled with joy to walk into God's waiting arms.

Sister Mary Ellen is now among the wise and faithful saints who line the halls of heaven. She was welcomed by her parents, Mary and Daniel, her sister Margaret (Peggy), and her brother Dennis. She is survived by her brothers Jack and Donald, her sister Kathleen, her dear sisters-in-law and brother-in-law, and by many nieces and nephews and their families. Services for Sister Mary Ellen will take place Monday, November 4, 2024, in St. Albert Chapel. Visitation will begin at 9:45AM, with a Prayer Service at 10:15AM. The Mass of Christian Burial and Interment in St. Dominic Cemetery, located on the Motherhousegrounds, will follow.
