

Words of Remembrance for S. Maureen Connolly

Intro: Please be seated. It has long been a tradition in the School Sister community to share some words or remembrance at the start of each sister's funeral so today we carry on that tradition for S Maureen.

Sister Maureen lived her religious life among us. She affirmed her Baptism through her Religious Profession of Vows, in which she promised to serve the people of God. In Sister Maureen's profession, represented by her vow paper and our Response in Faith: Rule of Life and Constitution of the School Sisters of St. Francis that you see here on the table near her picture, she committed herself to a life shaped by the Gospel. May she now enter into eternal life – a promise made to all who are faithful.

Today you will likely hear much about Maureen's life from her family as they share their memories with you. I want to say a few words about Maureen's 60+ year adventure of religious life.

Shortly after high school Maureen joined the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus in West Virginia and taught elementary and high school students. In the mid-1960s Vatican II was bringing major changes to the church and to religious life. Maureen could see that the Sisters with whom she began her religious life journey were beginning to decline and that they were possibly on a long painful journey to completion.

She knew that she wanted to continue her life as a vowed woman religious and to do that she would need to join a different community. While studying Religious Education at Creighton University she met a School Sister of St. Francis who invited her to consider joining the School Sisters of St. Francis. In 1975 she formally transferred her vows to the School Sister community and this became her new home.

After joining the School Sisters, Maureen continued to serve as a teacher in northeast Nebraska. In 1980 Maureen began teaching theology at Archbishop Ryan High school in Omaha. This ministry brought Maureen much joy because of

its innovative teaching style. Sadly Ryan High School closed in 1983 and Maureen moved on to other ministries.

Maureen served on the board of directors of Siena/Francis House and during her term as board chair the shelter hired its first salaried manager. She also ministered for five years at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and developed a religious education program for youth.

In 1992 Maureen became program coordinator for New Covenant Justice and Peace Center, developing activities for the Black Catholic Scholarship Program for students, mentors and parents. The City of Omaha awarded her the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "Living the Dream" Award in 2007.

Sister Maureen served the Alternatives to Violence Project at the Omaha Correctional Center as a facilitator from 2005 to 2017, and as Omaha Coordinator from 2009 until her death. In this work, they were leading three-day workshops each month with and for the men at the Omaha Correctional Center. They also began working with families and former inmates to help the public understand the need for transformative change in our society.

Maureen had a very rich and fulfilling life. At the time of her 60th Jubilee Maureen said of her life that it, quote "feels like a miracle, a wondrous experience of a life filled with blessings and joys. For the sad times," she said, "there has been a bountiful supply of love and care to sustain me through the pain. Thanks to all of you – my family and friends – for such goodness and kindness. I hold you in gratitude, love and peace." Close quote.

Maureen your years of life and service with the School Sisters of St Francis have blessed and enriched many. We say, "well done good and faithful servant." We know that one day we will be re-united with you in God's kingdom where all that you worked so hard to accomplish in your life will be realized. May you rest in peace!