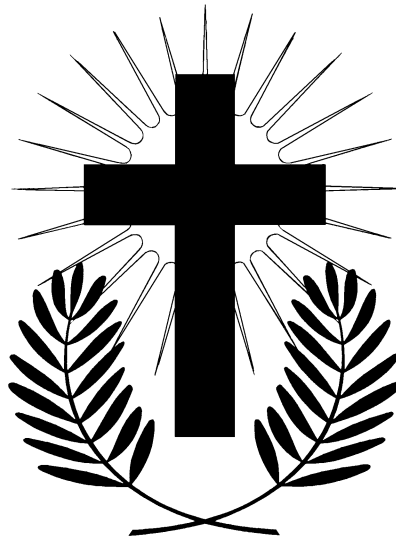


*SISTER MARY ELIZABETH*

*OF THE HEART OF JESUS*

*McKEEVER*



*BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:  
JUNE 20, 1920*

*BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:  
SEPTEMBER 22, 2010*

**Sister Mary Elizabeth McKeever**  
**Province of U.S.A. & Canada**  
**1920 –2010**

Sister Mary Elizabeth's mission was to spread the good news of Catholicism to everyone.

Left foot, right foot, forward--She was not a shrinking violet!

Everyone who has known Sister Mary Elizabeth remembers her imprint!

All over the world people are wishing rest to this little energetic woman who was once part of their lives: Belfast, Sligo, Limerick in Ireland; Melbourne, Australia; Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Newport, Rhode Island, Wilmington and San Pedro, California, USA.

Truly she loved all people but Catholic people were the best in her opinion. A native of Belfast, Northern Ireland and growing up in the 1930's and 1940's, Sister Mary Elizabeth encountered the challenges of the Catholic and Protestant divide. But she was never prejudiced—she was just sorry for those poor Protestants who did not have the true faith. While she wanted everyone to be Catholic, she never failed to acknowledge the goodness, kindness, generosity and courage of others—even non-Catholics. This would cause her to admit in wonder, “Imagine, he (she) isn't even Catholic!”

She was already a working girl before World War II began. She was a wage earner and contributing to the support of the household. There were ten children born after her and only her father earning any money. She helped her parents through the death of her young brother, Arthur, at an early age. All her life she loved learning, was an avid reader, and loved and wrote poetry. Her sacrifice to leave school at an early age was a sacrifice made for the sake of her younger brothers and sisters and she never regretted that choice. Her siblings went for higher education and were successful in their professional lives and this was a source of pride for her.

Belfast during World War II suffered severe bombings. Her younger brothers and sisters were evacuated to rural areas for their safety but she remained in the city. She would recall the horrors of the nightly “blitz”—the dash to the shelters, the numerous people crouching in fear in underground tunnels and the sadness and horror of emerging after the bombings to the death and destruction around them. Yet in the midst of all this she loved life and went to dances every chance she got. She was a great ballroom dancer and a lovely singer—and she never lost her sense of style, especially for shoes!! She never lost her spirits or her sense of humor.

When the Legion of Mary began in Belfast she became an ardent member and it was through the Legion of Mary that she first heard God’s call to a life of total dedication. One day a friend of hers, Mary Killen, who was ministering with her in the Legion of Mary said to her, “I am convinced God wants you. I am convinced you have a religious vocation and I believe you should go to Cluny.” While a bit of a shock to her, she was open to the Spirit and set her sights for Cluny. When Mary Killen heard of Mary Elizabeth’s plans to enter Cluny, she decided that she would go along. When the war ended Mary Elizabeth was 25 years old and she began to think seriously of dedicating her whole life to God. She made contact with the Congregation, and was accepted as a postulant in 1946. Mary Killen became Sister Madeleine and Mary Elizabeth McKeever became Sister Immaculata. Their friendship was a constant thread in their lives. Sister Immaculata made religious profession in 1949. Her parents, family, and friends were amazed!!!

In 1950 twelve Cluny Sisters set out on an ocean liner for 4 weeks to begin a new Cluny foundation in Melbourne, Australia. Sister Immaculata was one of a group of six sisters who organized a home for elderly ladies in Kew. For nine years, Sister Immaculata cared for “the dear old ladies”.

In 1959, Sister was sent to take charge of the refectory (dining room) in the seminary in Weribee, Australia. Priests, seminarians and students soon learned that order and cleanliness were at all times required by Sister Immaculata.

In 1964, after a year in Paris, France, she was assigned to the Province of the United States and Canada and undertook a variety of ministries. A strong debater and formidable opponent, Sister Immaculata was most noted for her ability to hold her ground, stubbornly arguing her point and at times acting on it. Yet, no matter how intense the disagreement, she would always see it as a past occurrence and was always ready to perform acts of charity. No matter what the situation, she was always ready to forgive.

In the United States, Sister Immaculata reconnected with the Legion of Mary and all their good works. She was very active in the presidium in Newport, R.I. While her ministries for the community changed, she always found time for her weekly Legion Meeting and her Legion work. After 37 years on the east coast of the United States, Sister Immaculata, who was now known as Mary Elizabeth, was asked to come west to Saints. Peter and Paul Community in Wilmington, California.

Her openness to all people, her smile, her quick, but sincere greeting soon endeared her to everyone.

To her joy she discovered at Saints Peter and Paul Church welcoming priests and a sacristy that needed some organization and soon it became her domain -- washing, ironing, and mending altar lines was her delight as was setting up for the daily and Sunday Masses—she had to be there to ensure right order.

Once again she reconnected with the Legion of Mary upon her arrival at Saints Peter and Paul, becoming their spiritual guide. She visited sick, shut-ins, officiated at vigils and graveside services as requested and spent many hours in the adoration chapel. The weekly meetings were a real source of joy for her. The core of her involvement was motivated by her love of the Blessed Virgin.

She was ardently Pro-Life. As part of her morning prayer she “baptized” all the babies aborted in the last 24 hours!! She went to every rally; sent money to every pro-life cause and recited the Rosary for the unborn every day.

In 2005 she began to slow down and became a bit forgetful, but she kept going. By 2008 she voluntarily but sadly reduced her workload. Our move in October of 2009 from Saints Peter and Paul in Wilmington to Mary Star of the Sea Parish in San Pedro was hard on her but she was most willing to adapt herself to her new parish. While missing her numerous friends and especially the Legion, she found solace in the welcome and affection she received from the priests, parishioners and the school children.

As her energy decreased, and as her health slowly declined, she became more dependent on others for help. Slowly and gently she was asked by the Lord to sacrifice her independence “.. when you

were young you would go where you would, but when you are old another will take you where you would rather not go.” From June of 2010 her care went from assistance to full care, yet at every stage she was docile and gracious. No matter how weak she was, she would look directly at the person who was caring for her and say, “Thank you.” with a weak smile.

We were witness to the energetic, determined, self-willed, independent and always “right” “M’Liz” graciously surrender to Jesus, who seemed to whisper —“Well done, good and faithful servant. Come, enter into your reward.”

On Wednesday, September 22 there was a change. At 10:00 a.m. the whole community gathered around her bed and with Gerard, her nephew from New York, and Maribelle, her faithful helper for three years, we prayed, sang and offered her to God. At 10:43 a.m. her gentle breathing stopped. We will miss her, but we love to think of her in heaven organizing the choirs of angels, meeting old friends, telling the stories of her youth and once again dancing the dances of bygone days. Sister Mary Elizabeth, may the Virgin Mary, whom you loved so dearly, continue to bless us through you.