

SISTER ELIZABETH
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
BUTLER



BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:
AUGUST 13, 1938

BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:
OCTOBER 2, 2011

Sister Elizabeth Butler
Province of U.S.A. & Canada
1938-2011

Born into a faith-filled family and nurtured in its traditions, Mary Philomena Butler grew up in Ireland during World War II and its aftermath. Despite the country's neutrality, the side effects of war affected Irish living. Frugality and general restrictions streamlined Irish life and influenced the rising generations. Conditioned by these circumstances, Mary entered the novitiate in Ferbane, Ireland on September, 1956. She received the name of Sister Elizabeth of the Immaculate Conception and made profession on August 12, 1958. That year a new foundation in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada was opening its doors to four Cluny sisters, one of whom would be Sister Elizabeth. She welcomed the newness of Canadian life and ministry. When later she moved to United States of America in 1966, we often heard the stories of her early days north of the border.

In USA as in Canada, thoroughness was part of her work ethic. She did not spare herself, but strove for quality in all she did. As a teacher in the primary grades in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and later in Cluny School in Newport, Rhode Island, her students knew she meant business. Each one, whether average or gifted, was challenged to the utmost.

After serving in different ministries for a total of six years at St. Margaret's, Our Lady of Providence and St. John's communities in Rhode Island Sister Elizabeth was transferred to Wilmington, California in 1984. Health problems affected her stamina for many years but she eventually attained a measure of well-being. Having felt a call to assist in Sts. Peter and Paul Poverty Program at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Wilmington, she resigned from the school and went to work with Sister Lelia and her team in parish social work. The needs were numerous, varied and deserving. As a practical lady, she strove to make a practical difference. With a business sense, she looked especially to housing and health needs and applied her best

techniques. She preferred to walk and meet people rather than take a ride. They knew her and she knew them! This ministry of “the road” built friendships and gave a base for networking in the outreach program. After Sister Lelia’s death, Sister Elizabeth assisted full time in Sts. Peter and Paul Poverty Program and guided the program through a successful transition from being run by the sisters to being run by the parish. In community she was a go-getter for many and varied internal ministries including community bursar. She would make her offer of help as “Butler service”.

A restricted diet had helped her general health for some years, but suddenly after the parish fiesta July 2011, she began a rapid decline. Hospital and surgeries revealed a terminal abdominal condition. Palliative care was the recommendation and with her return to the convent, Hospice services were employed. Her mind was clear and she expressed her wishes. Visitors came with numerous gifts and she was gracious to all. There were no complaints. Prescribed medications controlled pain and gave periods of rest. Her nephew, Gerard Armstrong, living locally frequently visited her. According to her wishes, the sisters were alert to her movements during the nights and took turns being with her. She united her prayers with theirs and up to the end prayed her favorite prayer:

Jesus, Mary and Joseph I give you my heart and my soul,
Jesus, Mary and Joseph assist me in my last agony
Jesus, Mary and Joseph may I breathe forth my soul in peace
with you.

On the early morning of October 2, as we gathered at her bed she breathed her last and went to God.

The viewing and Mass of Resurrection were held in Mary Star of the Sea Church, at 9:30 on October 6, attended by family from Ireland and Oregon. Interment followed at 2:00 pm in All Souls Cemetery in Long Beach, California. As we grieve her passing, we also give thanks for her heartfelt response to the call “Come, follow Me.”
(Mt. 19: 21b)