

Reflection on the Gift of the Life and Ministry of Sister Mary Sheila Malloy, SC

Margaret Catherine Malloy was born March 4, 1919 to James C. and Margaret (Glitsch) Malloy and had one sibling, J. Regis Malloy who is with us this morning. She was baptized on March 22, 1919 in St. Andrew's Church, North Side, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Margaret spent most of her childhood in Manchester on the North Side of Pittsburgh. Her high school days were completed at St. Joseph Academy Juniorate at Seton Hill, after which she entered the Sisters of Charity on September 8, 1937.

Although Sister Mary Sheila was an instructor in the Home Economics Department at Seton Hill College from 1948-1960, most of her religious life, before the age of 65, was spent as a high school teacher of home economics.

On the occasion of her Golden Jubilee, Sister Mary Sheila wrote,

Each year in community is a continued greater realization of what my vocation means to me. . I am grateful to God and to my parents who supported me, who let me go at the early age of fourteen to be a part of the Sisters of Charity and this community to whom I am indebted forever.

I would hope that this manifestation of thanks and praise would be shared by all those present. Perhaps this may be a time for someone who feels she is being called to say "yes". This is my hope and my prayer.

In January 2011, when Sister Mary Sheila asked me to write this reflection she requested that I focus on her life after age 65. She described this as a time when she initiated a change from secondary education to work for the Senior Companion Program, an ACTION program sponsored by the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging.

This change was "like a little heaven on earth" for Sister. Her first assignment was at the Forbes Center for Gerontology where, she noted, "Working with recreational therapists helped me to better understand the elderly and handicapped. (They are terrific morale boosters!)"

The January 24, 1992 Newsletter included a note of congratulations to Sister Mary Sheila Malloy for being nominated and voted for five consecutive years as a member of the Advisory Council of the Senior Companion Program of Allegheny County. This council was composed of those who worked as advocates for improving and maintaining a desirable standard of living for the elderly.

From 1984 until 2007, when she "retired and moved to Caritas Christi", Sister Mary Sheila served as a senior companion and Eucharistic Minister and home visitor at St. Kieran Parish, the Ursuline Center, Canterbury Place, St. Matthew Parish (the merged parish of St. Kieran and St. Mary Assumption), and Etna Commons. As she described these various ministry positions her eyes twinkled and her countenance was radiant.

Sister Mary Sheila followed in the footsteps of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and Saint Vincent de Paul in bringing Christ to all whom she met and served. She told me that she especially loved taking

Communion to the sick, to the hospitalized and to those in nursing homes. She also comforted the families of her “special friends” who were called home.

For a total of fifteen years, Sister Mary Sheila lived in Senior Housing, first at Lambeth Place in the Lawrenceville/Bloomfield area and then at Etna Commons. She felt that living with senior residents provided opportunities to be of service to her neighbors. She made friends among the residents. She noted that occupants of the neighboring apartments made efforts to watch out for her as she did for them. She described her experiences in senior housing as a gift.

In 1999, Sister received the Diocese of Pittsburgh’s *Manifesting the Kingdom Award* for her “exceptional service to the people of God uniquely reflected in her life, ministry and work.” When a North Hills Record reporter interviewed her about this award, Sister responded, “This year, the bishop wanted to acknowledge all of those people who do behind-the-scenes work for the church. It’s wonderful, wonderful work, and I was surprised to receive the award.”

During our last visit, Sister had difficulty getting comfortable in her recliner and finding words to describe her feelings. We sat together in silence for quite awhile, until she whispered, “I hope that I have done enough in my life and God will welcome me home soon.”

On Friday morning, while I was waiting for a flight from Houston to Pittsburgh, I received a call from Sister Mary Ann Winters who told me that Sister was released from her suffering.

On the flight to Pittsburgh, I reflected on the Book of Wisdom 3:1-9—the one reading that Sister Mary Sheila had selected for her funeral liturgy.

I found comfort in these phrases as I contemplated Sister’s homecoming:

“ . . . the souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, and no torment shall ever touch them. . . .” (Wisdom, 3:1)¹

“ . . . he has tested them like gold in a furnace, and accepted them as a holocaust . . .” (Wisdom 3:6)

“ . . . those who are faithful will live with him in love; for grace and mercy await those he has chosen.” (Wisdom 3:9)

I imagined her smiling and then shouting aloud, “Thank you God, for never giving up on me.”

Sister Mary Sheila, may you rest in peace until we meet again.

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¹ The Jerusalem Bible translation.