



Sister Florence Leone Poch Professed 1950

"Kairos is an Eternal Presence that cannot be earned or attained, because it already is. It always is. And it is ours for the uncovering, for the allowing, for the experiencing... within any now of our choosing."

(Statement from Kairos House of Prayer)

Sister Florence Leone Poch died in St. Joseph Care Center in Spokane, Washington, on January 7, 2024. She had been professed for 74 years and had spent most of those years in spiritual ministry as administrator of Kairos House of Prayer. Born Donna Lee Poch in Fairfax, Washington, to parents Leon Poch and Florence Irene Roberts, she had one brother Robert. The family attended Visitation Parish and Donna graduated from St. Leo High School in Tacoma, before entering the congregation in 1948 and professing vows in 1950.



With an education degree from Marylhurst College, Sister Florence began her ministry life teaching in the San Diego, Portland, and Baker Dioceses. In 1971, Sister Florence began to discern a call to a ministry that would give people an opportunity to experience a prayerful, contemplative environment. After participating in a house of prayer program in Detroit and helping begin the Still Point House of Prayer in upstate New York, she returned to Spokane and established Kairos House of Prayer on the grounds of Immaculate Heart Retreat Center. When Immaculate Heart needed the small brick house for other programs, Sister Florence needed to find a new home for Kairos. She found a temporary home at St. Joseph's Home for Children, but after about a year Kairos House of Prayer relocated to its permanent location—a beautiful 27-acre forested property on a hilltop about 12 miles from downtown Spokane. For over 40 years, Sister Florence ran Kairos House with the help of Rita Beaulieu.

Kairos House was a place where seekers could go to spend time in silence and enjoy delicious vegetarian meals. Many sisters have fond memories of time spent with Sister Florence at Kairos House of Prayer which they shared for Sister Florence's 70th Jubilee celebration. Sister Mary Jo Chaves said, "I recall my visits to Kairos, cooking there and sitting under the tree in the front yard for spiritual direction, with the doggies in attendance. Florence's advice was always wise and inspiring! It moved me to become a spiritual director myself." Sister Joanne Clavel shared, "Retreats at Kairos were special. Florence introduced us all to a new way of praying. She taught us to be in the present moment, to let God be and to be ourselves and find the God within." Sister Celeste Crine recalled, "Florence's presence was an invitation to 'be present' to the Holy Presence in whatever we were doing. I remember moments of laughter around the table at some of our area chapter meetings. I loved the stories she shared about the assistance of the Scouts in clearing branches, the Zen community who assisted around the grounds, of the turkeys and deer and so many more..." Sister Pat Millen wrote, "For me, Sister Florence was a modern-day mystic."

In an interview with the *Spokesman-Review*, Sister Florence explained the importance of silence saying, "Over and over again, I have read in the teachings of the masters of contemplation that unless we go through the silence, we cannot come to a deep experience of God. As good as they are, we must move beyond the thoughts, the words." In the same interview, she was asked how she wanted to be remembered. Sister Florence said, "I've thought about what I would like said at my funeral. I'd like God's goodness and faithfulness to be the center of the celebration." She continued, "Who are we? Our name, our profession, what people say or know of us? We're so much more than that. We can acknowledge what people do, but the mystery that lives in you and lives in me is much more. So, if people would just sit in respective silence to remember me, I have no problem with that."

Sister Florence, you felt a call to create a place of welcome and silence for those seeking the Eternal Presence. You have been a good and faithful person and have touched the lives of many people near and far. May you rest now in the arms of Love.

A prayer vigil will be on Thursday, January 25 at 6 P.M. at St. Charles Parish, 4515 N Alberta St., Spokane, Washington. Mass of Christian Burial will be at the same location on Friday, January 26 at 11 A.M. with a reception to follow. Internment of ashes will take place after the reception in Holy Cross Cemetery, 7200 N Wall St., Spokane.

