



Sister Elizabeth Mary Novak, OSF

Professed 1958

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." Pablo Picasso



Sister Elizabeth Mary Novak, OSF, passed away on Sunday, November 3, 2024. Throughout her 66 years as a professed Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, she lovingly witnessed to her Franciscan charism and faith. Sister Elizabeth entered the congregation in 1956 and professed her first vows in 1958. She shared her wisdom, generous spirit, and Franciscan joy with all she met in her education ministry and her life in community.

Patricia Catherine Novak was born in Baltimore, Maryland. She, her parents—Stephen and Sophia—and her three brothers and three sisters attended Sacred Heart Parish. Sister Elizabeth had fond memories of her elementary school years at Sacred Heart of Jesus and her high school years at The Catholic High School of Baltimore. After entering the congregation at the age of 20, she went on to earn a BA in English from Mount St. Mary's College in 1969.

Sister Elizabeth Mary served in elementary education for over 60 years. She taught for 46 years in her hometown of Baltimore, Maryland. She once wrote, "My ministry has always been in elementary education and what a joy these many years have offered me."

Sister Elizabeth helped to shape the minds and hearts of countless children that she taught at Little Flower School, Queen of Peace Lower School, and St. Elizabeth School, all in the Baltimore area. For 31 years she faithfully served at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Essex. She was awarded the Teacher of the Year Award from the archdiocese in 1988 and the Maryland Archdiocese Teaching Excellence Award in 2005. Additionally, Sister Elizabeth taught at Corpus Christi School in Elsmere and St. Thomas School in the Wilmington Diocese, as well as at Nativity School in Washington, DC. Sister Elizabeth once described herself and her teaching style, writing, "I am a prayerful and compassionate person who is a good listener. I am also a quiet and laid-back person with a pleasant personality."

Many former students commented on the loss of Sister Elizabeth on Facebook stating that "she was kind," with one former student writing, "I am very sad to read this. Sister Elizabeth was my first-grade teacher at Corpus Christi in Elsmere, and we were her first class. She was a wonderful woman. I was left-handed and she didn't try to change that. That spoke volumes. May she rest in peace and rise with Christ in glory." Another former student recalled the same, "I remember her as a gentle and kind person who gave my first-grade self a secure and easy entry to formal education. I was a left-hander, and she didn't try to change that. Her gracious acceptance of how God made me was a wonderful lesson to keep in my life's notebook." It is often the little things that make a big difference in the life of a child and Elizabeth's gentle way and acceptance of all obviously made a significant impact. She was a prayerful sister that put her God first and showed great concern for others.

Reflecting on her life as a Sister of St. Francis, Sister Elizabeth shared, "Being a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia has been very rewarding, fulfilling, and a precious gift from God for me." In her free time, Sister Elizabeth enjoyed baking, cooking, reading, walking, and taking trips to the beach. Her long-time friend and former housemate, Sister Michele O'Brien, remembers Elizabeth, "She was a quiet, loving, and caring person. She loved to cook and to bake cookies. On snow days, Elizabeth would be in the kitchen making breakfast for all of us at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Convent." She also enjoyed sports, and one Assisi House employee stated, "I will miss our talks about football." Many people remember Sister Elizabeth as a beautiful person—sweet, caring, and thoughtful. Sister Elizabeth certainly found her gift as a sister and as an educator and she shared that gift with all who were fortunate enough to have known her.



All services will be held at Assisi House on Wednesday, November 6, 2024, and will be livestreamed. Viewing will begin at 9:30 A.M., followed by Mass of Christian Burial at 11 A.M. Burial will be in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.