



*Sister Elaine Thaden, OSF*  
*Professed 1960*

*“For human beings, the most daunting challenge is to become fully human.  
For to become fully human is to become fully divine.”*  
— Thomas Keating



With a deep commitment to ongoing conversion and a life spent in prayer and loving service as a teacher, administrator, missionary, and spiritual director, Sr. Elaine Thaden (formerly Sister Joseph Maureen), died in Riddle Hospital on May 7, 2026. She had been a professed member of the congregation for 66 years.

Elaine Ann was born in Tacoma, Washington, to Robert and Stella as the only daughter among their four children. The family belonged to Holy Rosary Parish in Tacoma, and Elaine knew at the age of six that she wanted to be a sister just like Sr. Benjamin, a Benedictine. Attending elementary school with the Benedictines, Elaine assumed that she would enter their congregation—her parents were even Benedictine Oblates. However, the Franciscans who taught her at St. Leo High School won her over with their Franciscan joy.

After profession, Sr. Elaine began her ministry teaching intermediate grades for three years at St. Thomas School in Riverside, California. She then spent nine years teaching and working as an administrator at St. Charles School, two years as a house mother at St. Ann Home, and one year as vice principal at All Saints Middle School—all in Spokane, Washington. She also spent six years as principal at St. Edward School in Corona, California. Next, she spent three years at Sacred Heart High School in Klamath Falls, Oregon, where she taught theology and served as development coordinator.

After 25 years in education, Sr. Elaine moved into full-time spiritual ministry at Still Point House of Prayer in Seattle, Washington. There, she became connected to the teachings of Thomas Keating on Centering Prayer, even meeting with him personally and taking further training through his Intensive Retreats. She once wrote, “My time at Still Point felt like coming home to my true self and I came to realize how carefully God had been awakening me to this ministry since my earliest years in religious life.” Following her time at Still Point, Sr. Elaine journeyed to Washington Theological Union, where she studied spiritual direction as part of her MA program.

Upon graduating from WTU, Sr. Elaine traveled to Zambia, where she taught at Mpima Major Seminary and was in charge of the spiritual aspects of the program, taught several courses, and directed up to 20 young men. After three years at Mpima, she moved to Lusaka, the capital city, and worked in the pastoral office of the diocese in leadership formation workshops and retreats. Sr. Elaine also worked with the Zambian Association of Sisterhoods to create training for Zambian spiritual directors.

Following nine years in Zambia, Sr. Elaine returned to Spokane, serving eight years as the director of St. Joseph Family Center. She spent the next twelve years in spiritual ministry, including vocation ministry for the congregation. Sr. Christine Still ministered with her in vocation ministry and shared, “You could always find us plotting and planning our next adventures with a deep desire for a meaningful experience for those discerning religious life, while finding delight in simply having fun and laughing at some outrageous suggestions that we never planned to implement.”

Sr. Elaine enjoyed following professional and college sports and attending live theater and symphonies. In her younger years, she enjoyed camping in the great Northwest. She loved her family and was especially close to her brother, Fr. Roy Thaden, SJ, who was also a missionary in Zambia. Sr. Christine remembers, “Elaine was happiest when with people she loved... family, community, colleagues in ministry, close friends. She truly enjoyed celebrating relationship. Whatever she took on, she did with full gusto and commitment.”

Sr. Elaine, you were an example to all who knew you, a beautiful life lived in prayer and service. Rest now in the arms of the God you sought to follow.

*All Services will be held at Assisi House on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, and will be [livestreamed](#).  
A Christian Wake Service will be held at 9:30 A.M., with Mass of Christian Burial at 11 A.M.  
Internment of Ashes will follow in Our Lady of Angels Cemetery.*

