

Sister Evelyn Joyce Metro, CSC

(Sister M. Francilda)

April 20, 1928 — July 2, 2018

These memories were written by Sister Frances B. O'Connor, CSC, and shared at the funeral on July 5, 2018.

Ecclesiastes tells us for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance, etc.

It seems for us, an aging congregation, that the time to die is coming much too frequently. However, we are reminded that within our lives there is a time for every matter under heaven. So, as I began thinking about how I wanted to remember my bandmate, Evelyn Joyce, I thought back to my time at the Kellogg Institute at Notre Dame where I attended the 5:15 Mass at the Basilica. Often the presider was Father Regis Duffy, a Franciscan priest and a professor of homiletics.

He began each Mass by asking us to “take a few moments to reflect on what we had done with God’s time since last we met.” This opening was very centering and focused and was intended to raise our awareness of God’s gift to each of us – time – and our gift to God – how we use that time.

So today, I’d like to take some time to reflect on how Sister Evelyn Joyce used God’s time. She was born in Wisner, Nebraska, on April 20, 1928, at the onset of the Great Depression, the eighth of nine children. She moved with her family in 1941 to California where she resided until she entered the community. In 1947, applying to the Sisters of the Holy Cross, she described herself as “cheerful and even-tempered.” In 1989 she wrote that the greatest gift she had to share was “my love of life.” There was not much difference between the girl and the woman she grew to be.

By all accounts she was a lady to her fingertips, who kept her composure even when giving a disruptive student a piece of her mind. Later at the convent evening meal, she shared her rendition of the incident, always bringing laughter. A sister who lived with her recounted that Evelyn loved having her hair “looking good” (translation: “red and shining”) because she didn’t want her roots showing gray; she skipped a doctor’s appointment to see beautician Darlene (Allen-Quinn) for a final hair appointment, which was a huge effort.

Her 30 years teaching grades fifth through eighth were spent in Catholic schools in California, Washington and Nevada (1950-1980). She started a master’s degree in religious education, to prepare her to teach religion in high school, where she was beloved by her students.

Evelyn also had a love of reading, sports and travel. It was her desire to travel that led her to the Saint Mary’s College Rome program from 1989 to 1998, she was a welcoming presence to college women studying abroad. Dr. Portia Prebys was the Rome Program director and recalls that Sister Evelyn was “a gem of a person and a wonderful colleague,” who had a life-changing influence on the lives of several hundred students.

Evelyn left Rome to return to her beloved California and joined the community in Ventura, retiring there for 17 years. In 2015, she decided it was time to “permanently retire” and come to Saint Mary’s where she has been for the past three years.

As we all know, at this age especially, our time passes very quickly, so how we choose to spend it becomes even more relevant. We can see by this account of Evelyn’s life that she was very aware of what she was doing with God’s time. We know this because almost every story or personal account of her life that she shared ended with her saying, “God has been good. I have had a good life.”

Perhaps Portia Prebys’ description of Evelyn is an indicator of how she lived and what she did with God’s time. She writes, “Sister Evelyn always kept the highest standards in everything she did or said every day of her assignment here. She was a beacon for the

faculty and staff, for the Italians whose paths she crossed and, above all, for the students and their families. She always set an honest, low-key example of how to lead a true Christian life and set a meaningful, profound example of living in faith, hope and charity.”

Ecclesiastes tells us life is full of a lot of things, some of which we like and some we don't. The universe has an ebb and flow that is beyond our control. By the accounts of those who knew her well, perhaps we all can learn from Evelyn's example that it is not what happens or is done to us, but how we respond that matters.

Clearly, Evelyn understood that for everything there is a season, and she accepted each season of her life with hope and gratitude. The Dalai Lama tells us, “We must each lead a way of life with self-awareness and compassion, to do as much as we can. Then whatever happens we will have no regrets.”

Evelyn made the most of her 90 years and saw each day as a gift from God. She gratefully received all God had given her and gratefully offered all she had back to God in grateful service.

As we six remaining band members of our original group of 20 who entered the community in 1947 — Emeline, Mary Ada, Barbara Marie, Maris, Mary Ann Lamping and I — join you in saying goodbye to Sister Evelyn, let us all be mindful of God's gift to us — time, and what we do with it each day.

So in tribute to all that Sister Evelyn gave to us, and all the lives she touched, let us adhere to Ecclesiastes' message and choose this to be a time to laugh, not weep, and a time to dance, not mourn.

Rest in peace, Evelyn.