

August 5, 2014

Dear Sisters, Relatives and Friends of Sister Colleen,

Sister Colleen Ellen Mahony, OSF, was born on August 16, 1950 to Charles and Katheryn (Babbitt) Mahony in Spalding, Nebraska. She was the third youngest of 14 children and thrived in the culture of community that a large family generates. Her Irish wit and deep faith were but two products of this loving environment. Though she had no sense of direction on a road map, her heart's path was deeply attuned to Jesus. Colleen knew herself as forever found in the love of God.

Colleen was raised on her family property outside of O'Neill, NE and attended St. Mary's High School. Upon her graduation from high school, Colleen entered the community of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity on August 22, 1968 at Marycrest in Denver, Colorado. Colleen made her First Promises on August 21, 1971 and her Final Vows on August 3, 1975. Sr. Colleen received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1974 from Minot State College.

Between 1974 and 1989 Colleen taught elementary school on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations, working at both St. Francis Mission and Holy Rosary Mission. She fell in love with the Lakota people, and they with her, and so after spending some interim years in Alliance and Denver (1989 -92, where she served as Community Minister of Marian Residence, Novice Director, and Director of the Temporary Professed) she returned to Manderson, SD where she lived at St. Francis Home and taught at the local grade school in town. In 2000, still living at St. Francis Home, Colleen was Pastoral Minister for St. Agnes Parish in Manderson, while also serving as Director of Associates for the Province (2000-03). She left Manderson and the reservation in 2006 and moved to Denver, serving as the Administrator of Marycrest Convent and then in various other ministries.

Colleen served on the leadership team for Sacred Heart Province of the Sisters of St. Francis between 2003 and 2007 and from 2011 until the time she died. Colleen was a source of great wisdom, using her own life's learnings to assist in Council deliberations. One particular gift that Colleen brought to the Province was the discovery of a process for group listening and discernment called "Sacred Conversation." Colleen's own prayerful spirit latched on to this process as a way of respectful listening and speaking, where there is "a leader in every chair." This process, as described by Ann Linnea and Christina Baldwin, has transformed the Province in its most contemplative way of reaching group consensus.

In 2009 Colleen moved back to O'Neill, NE where she assumed the position of Director of Pastoral Care/Chaplain at Avera St. Anthony Hospital. There she consoled the dying, offered prayer to those who were struggling with health issues, offered support to loved ones and reached out to staff and administration alike. She also spent much time with her family who lives in the area.

Colleen entered Lutheran Hospital in Denver on June 23 for emergency surgery for a bowel obstruction. Three days later she was sent to ICU due respiratory distress after aspirating. This, as well as infection and multi-system failure, plagued her during the next two weeks. Colleen never got better and was moved to hospice on July 9. She died one week later on July 16, 2014. Colleen was surrounded by family, sisters and friends during these days of transition. A rosary was held July 23 and a funeral July 24 at St. Patrick's Church in O'Neill. As Colleen had wanted, there was much music and the telling of stories.

Colleen was preceded in death by her parents and two sisters: Mary Jo Gallagher and Karen Ramold. She is survived by her sisters Maureen (and Frank) Rohde, Bette (and Ed) Boyle, Charlene (and Dick) Boyle, Pauline (and Jim) Carr, Agnes (and Paul) Halverson, Rose Cooley, Theresa (and Gary) Parker, and brothers Pat (and Elva) Mahony; Mike Mahony (and Kim); Charles (and Diane) Mahony, and Kevin (and Patty) Mahony, and numerous nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. Colleen will be greatly missed!