



Sister Kateri Byrne, OP

Born to earthly life: October 23, 1925
Religious profession: August 4, 1946
Entered eternal life: June 17, 2014

“...I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it – if I do but keep His Commandments.”

from Cardinal Newman’s meditation S. Kateri shared with her nephew, Shawn

THESE WORDS THAT DEEPLY INFLUENCED HER NEPHEW could also describe Sister Kateri Byrne’s life – in her quiet, unassuming, caring way, she simply strove to “do good” whenever and wherever she could.

Mary Angela Byrne of Conrad, Montana, was the eldest of Joseph and Christine Byrne’s five children and their only daughter. She loved to learn, and especially enjoyed the two weeks each summer when Racine Dominicans came to teach religion. The sisters were kind, and she was impressed by how happy they seemed. Plus, she liked their habits!

When Mary graduated from high school in Great Falls, Mother Romana invited her to join the Racine Dominicans, explaining that she could begin teaching while continuing her own education.

When she was received into the community, Mary was given the name Sister Kateri, and though she taught for a few years, most of her 68 years in ministry were spent as nurse and caregiver to her sisters at Our Lady of the Oaks and Siena Center, and to patients in Osmond, Nebraska. “She was a confidant, careful listener, and wisdom person to many regarding their health needs,” noted S. Agnes Johnson. “The hour of the day or night did not deter her from being a support to people in need. She spent many hours with those taken to the emergency room for acute health problems.”

As a recipient of S. Kateri’s care when she underwent heart surgery, S. Mary Vaughn shared, “She always remained calm. Her presence was holy.” A sentiment reiterated by many sisters in various ways.

The miles that separated S. Kateri from her family did not distance her relationship with them. Visiting and staying in contact via phone and letters remained important throughout her life. The sensitivity, personal attention, and genuine care she showed toward her Racine Dominican Sisters also characterized her relationship with family, as noted by several nieces and nephews who sent memories to be shared at S. Kateri’s Remembering Service.

“Many years ago when I was struggling with the emotional toll of working in the social service field, I discussed with my aunt thoughts I had about changing careers,” her nephew Shawn recalled. “I shared how challenging it was to see so much pain and brokenness... S. Kateri listened with intent. She validated my concerns and provided kind words of encouragement as we ended our phone conversation.” A few days later, Shawn received from S. Kateri a meditation by Cardinal Newman, which had great impact on him then. Still working in mental health and social services 25 years later, Shawn is now Chief Operating Officer of the Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch. “I share this devotion while providing counsel to those staff members who need support.... S. Kateri has had, and will continue to have, an impact on social services and children’s mental health in the state of Montana.” Even now, she continues to “do good.”