

Vigil Service
Elizabeth Kennedy, pbvm
24 October 2024
by
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Provincial Leader (NL)

We greet Elizabeth's family and friends, her loving and devoted sisters-in-law, nieces and Todd, her faithful friend, Marilyn Doyle, and our Sisters, Associates and other friends as we gather to honor Elizabeth who was called home to God on 15 October 2024.

The journey into death begins at birth and Elizabeth started life on 28 March 1934, daughter of Monica Chafe and James Kennedy of Petty Harbour. Elizabeth was formed by the land and sea of this beautiful place, the town she loved so well.

Elizabeth joined our community on 7 September 1952, made first vows in 1955 receiving the name, Sister Mary Richard, and made final profession in 1960. Her life in community and ministry in NL was spent in Brent's Cove, Cape St. George, Carbonear, Corner Brook, Gander, Harbour Main, Mount Pearl, Piccadilly, Port au Port West, Renews, Stephenville, St. Alban's, St. Bride's, St. John's, Trepassey and Windsor where she was a loved primary teacher who showed great attentiveness to children with special needs.

Elizabeth's journey also took her to Antigua. Even before Nano founded our congregation, she had sent catechists to the West Indies in the 1770's to support the faith of the Irish indentured servants who had moved there. Nano advised her catechists, "*Be kind to the little blacks.*" The NL congregation responded to the invitation to minister in Antigua in 1995 when Mary Dower was our leader and our founding Sisters, Elizabeth and Paulette Nugent, arrived on the island in late August 1995. Their welcome to Antigua came, not as baptism by fire but baptism by wind and water in the form of a Category 5 hurricane, Luis, on 5 September. The island was decimated – no phones, no electricity and limited water and food availability for months. A scary beginning indeed.

After the storm subsided, Elizabeth contributed to St. John's Primary School by assisting the teachers with teaching and classroom management skills and she

served as substitute teacher when teachers were out. The children loved her so much that they asked their regular teacher when she would be sick again so that they could have Sister Elizabeth. Elizabeth had taken Nano's advice and was kind to the little blacks.

Elizabeth, the artist: The great Maya Angelou says, *"Everybody born comes from the Creator trailing wisps of glory. I think that each one of us was born with creativity."* Well, Elizabeth had that gift, par excellence, and over the years, she, with Marilyn Doyle and Marie Furey created beautiful prayer centres for our special events and designed art of many genres, sizes and fabrics. These were always an asset to our Gatherings and those done for special occasions were admired all over the Presentation world.

Despite Elizabeth's commitment to life in community and ministry she knew well that *"Life isn't always a bowl of cherries."* She had her moments of sadness and pain and times of hurt and misunderstanding and in a desire to have a better life, she sought therapy at Emmaus House in New Jersey.

Elizabeth's dying process was not easy yet she faced her illness and death with grace and resignation. She fulfilled her last wishes by visiting her beloved hometown many times, including a visit just a week or so ago to her parents' graves. Little things held much meaning for Elizabeth so she included a visit to Piper's in one of her last outings.

She planned carefully for her wake, Vigil and Mass of Christian Burial and wanted only lively hymns and readings. A glimpse into some of her choices for her Vigil and Mass of Christian Burial:

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, *"There is a time for everything..."* invites us to accept the rhythms of life knowing that God holds the big design of our lives. Romans 8: 31-39 reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. And Elizabeth's choice of *"Lord of the Dance"* touches into our Christian and cosmic story:

*"I danced in the morning when the world was begun.
I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun.
And I came down from heaven and danced on the earth.*

What a joy!

“To dance wherever we may be”!

We used this quote from Joyce Rupp on Elizabeth’s prayer card:

*The darkness of outer space,
the greenness of our land
and the blue of our seas,
the breath of every human and creature,
all are intimately united in a cosmic dance of oneness
with the Creator’s dance of love.”*

You are free now, Elizabeth, to dance the eternal dance.