



Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

St. Paul Province

John Ellen Rogers, CSJ

May 6, 1922 ~ November 11, 2018

In her own words...

On March 6, 1922 John and Marie (Meehan) Rogers' first child was born at home on a farm near Waverly, MN. She was baptized at St. Mary's Church on March 19, 1922 and given the name Rita Mary. Her mother had promised St. Rita that she would name her daughter Rita when on the eve of her wedding her flowers had not arrived. Quick planning! The midnight train showed down and the box of flowers was thrown off, none broken. The Saint of the Impossible saved the day! As years went on, four more children were born: John, Margaret, James, and Dorothy.

Rita attended a one-room country school for first grade and St. Mary's School in Waverly for grades 2-12. She graduated in 1940, declined a scholarship and chose to attend the Teachers Training Department (formally known as Normal School) at Buffalo, Minnesota. After an intense year under a Master instructor, the class was ready to teach in country schools. During the summers, Rita attended Saint Cloud Teachers College, worked at Butler Brothers Wholesale, waitressed in the local restaurant, and worked at Saint Mary's Hospital in admitting and at the switchboard.

Rita had religious life on her mind from the time she was in grade school. The decision to enter was finally realized on February 2, 1949. She received the name John Ellen on August 15, 1949 and she completed the novitiate August 15, 1951. Several relatives had preceded her as CSJ's: Sister Resignata May was her dad's first cousin. Sister Constance Marie DeFoe, Sister Julie Boo and John Ellen all had the same great grandmother.

Sister John Allen's first mission was to Saint Patrick's School in St. Paul to teach fifth grade. That began 22 years of teaching and 12 years as principal—all in St. Paul. She taught at Saint Patrick, Nativity, Cathedral, Holy Spirit and St. Jerome. She served as principal at St. Pascal Baylon and St. Patrick. During those years there were Saturday classes and Summer School at the Diocesan Teachers College (formally the J. J. Hill residence) and The College of St. Catherine. From there she earned a BA in education and history. Later she went on to St. Thomas College and earned an MA in Improvement of Instruction (Education). Further educational opportunities were the Spiritual Institute at St. Norbert's College, DePere, WI and at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

When she decided to leave teaching, Sister Bernita Cain invited John Ellen to take her place at Cathedral as pastoral minister to the elderly. Monsignor Ambrose Hayden willingly hired her; so she joined Sister Karen Wadsworth and enjoyed that ministry for 11 years. The next invitation was to join Sisters Care, so from 1996 to 2007 she served as coordinator and then receptionist until it closed.

Sister John Ellen had the privilege of some wonderful traveling. In 1976 she attended Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia. She made a 30-day retreat in Nova Scotia, and visited St. Anne's, Cap-de-la-Madeleine, and Brother Andre's Shrine, Montreal, all in Quebec. Gifts made trips possible to Ireland, Italy and our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. She also traveled to Arizona and California.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“John Ellen was my best friend and I valued her friendship to the end. When I worked with her I found her to be a wonderful administrator, who really knew how to work with (handle) the staff in her care. She was very kind to the kids and they liked her quite a lot. She was very religious and felt very close to the Lord. John Ellen was one who always wanted to do the right thing.”

“A high point for John Ellen came during her time at St. Patrick's where it became necessary to form a novitiate community. This wonderful group included the Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen, South Dakota, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, Iowa, and the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, Merrill, WI, all working together for a sacred cause.”

“John Ellen made deep and lasting connections at all the places she worked and even helped to facilitate Sunday by Sunday groups well after she retired from the Cathedral.”

“She was a good baker and a gracious host. She really knew how to prepare an orderly, beautiful meal, and her pie crust was the best around! She loved to sew and did a lot of mending for those who lived with her.”

“John Ellen was one who would really think things through so that every task would have an order and progression of how they should be done. What I learned most from her was how to be patient and kind with people without drawing focus to the self. She expanded my awareness of humility and I was so appreciative of the mutual respect and reverence we both had in our friendship.”

John Ellen is preceded in death by her parents Marie (Meehan) and John Anthony Rogers; brothers John and James; sisters Margaret and Dorothy. She is survived by many nieces and nephews, dear friends and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates.

Mass of Christian Burial was held Friday, November 16, 2018 at 11:00 AM, in Our Lady of the Presentation Chapel, 1884 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul, MN with Visitation at 10:00 AM preceding Mass. Burial was at Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights, MN.

Sister John Ellen, rest in love and peace.