

**Sister Kathleen Quigley, SC**  
Entered eternal life on March 8, 2026



This is a story about family.

We all remember certain events in our lives; 9-11, the day President Kennedy was shot, the Challenger disaster. As a matter of fact, it seems like the things that are embedded in our memories are often disasters.

I remember Sept. 6, 1963. It was my very first day of high school. That day I got up early and got on the 29 bus and rode nearly the entire length of Bloomfield Ave, to 300 N. Broadway in Newark and the foreboding seven story granite edifice of Essex Catholic High School. Kathy and I had practiced the bus run a few weeks earlier because she had done it many times traveling to Immaculate Conception in Montclair and she didn't want me to get lost. But actually, I remember very little of what happened that first day at Essex. What I do remember happened after school ended.

I was picked up by my parents and Kathy and I sat in the back seat as we made the silent drive to the Postulate at Convent Station. Kathy was met by Sister Rosemary Steer and taken up the stairs of the Postulate and emerged a while later in her new black habit, and who can forget those big black shoes. We said our goodbyes and drove home with my mother quietly sobbing in the front seat. That's what I remember.

You see, the entire summer before that was what I called the summer of Kathy's lasts. For wherever we went, my mother would say, "This is Kathy's last time going to a movie." "This is Kathy's last time going to the beach." "This is Kathy's last time going to Palisades Park." Well, it wasn't Kathy's last time doing anything, except maybe Palisades Park. It was a time of new opportunities opening for Kathy.

I'm not sure how we should judge the worth of a person. It's not wealth or fame, but I believe it might be how many people we touch in our life. And Kathy touched many. After earning her degree in biology at St. Elizabeth's, she went on to teach at Marylawn and then Immaculate Conception. But Kathy didn't just teach, she became involved with her students, she cared about her students. I remember walking down the street with Kathy or at a restaurant and young men and women would come running over exclaiming "Sr. Kathy!" and then relate a story of how Kathy had affected their lives.

Around 1980, as summer approached, Kathy was sitting with Sister Roberta trying to decide what to do that summer. Sister Roberta mentioned that she was going to Mississippi to help Sister Marie Gilligan with a summer Bible school. Kathy asked if she could go too and then added, "Who is Sister Marie Gilligan?" Well, Kathy and Roberta did go to Mississippi for a few weeks and when they got back, Kathy declared, "I have to go back," and within a few weeks she packed up her car and headed south. She had found her true calling in social ministry in the small town of Amory, Mississippi.

Working with Sister Marie, they set up a community food bank, worked with the girl Scouts, led the town Ecumenical Council, fought for social justice, helped people get food stamps and enroll in Headstart, helped to resettle Vietnamese refugees. They embodied the spirit of the beatitudes and literally lived the Corporal Works of Mercy: going to impoverished homes feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, helping to shelter the homeless. When the police found a runaway late at night, or a young man was arrested for a minor crime, they would call Kathy and Marie and they would immediately come and find shelter or provide bail. They never said no, they always found a way to help.

And at the same time, they were totally involved in the small parish of St. Helen's. Kathy became very active in her music ministry, writing over 125 songs and working hard to produce several albums, scrounging to secure money for studio time and using her church choir members for the voices on her recordings.

In 1993, the pastor retired and there was no priest available to replace him. Sister Marie was installed as the Resident Pastoral Minister of St. Helen's and Marie and Kathy took on the additional duties of running the parish. Under their leadership the parish flourished and grew. They performed baptisms, conducted funerals, led Sunday Eucharistic services. Soon their thriving church community grew from 43 to 70 families outgrew their small church building of ten pews.

Kathy and Marie then led the church community to build a new church with room for all. Everyone pitched in to raise the required funds. There were bake sales, auctions, and craft sales. The small church was towed away, and the new one rose in its place. When the bishop came to dedicate the new church, Sister Marie handed him a check for the final payment. I think perhaps these two women were too successful for in 1999, after touching so many people, the Glenmary priests, responsible for the parish, asked them to leave.

Kathy returned to NJ as campus minister for Marylawn. She continued with her music and produced her last album, "Let Everything That Breathes Praise God". She was so excited when that song was chosen as the anthem for the 150th year celebration of the Sisters of Charity at Sacred Heart Cathedral in 2009 with hundreds singing.

Kathy was restless at Marylawn and soon became chaplain at St. Vincent's Rehab center. She loved dealing with the people and helping wherever she could. As it turned out, that's where she would spend her last days.

While at St. Vincent's, Kathy's memory began to fail, and she was forced to retire. Kathy never really understood nor accepted the disease that was taking over within her. I was never able to talk to her about it or make plans for the future. She never understood why she had to retire, why her car was taken away, why she had to move back to the Motherhouse, ultimately why she had to go into memory care.

At the beginning I said this was a reflection on family. Well, I haven't talked much about family. When Kathy's memory began to fail, Nancy and I had moved to Colorado which made returning to see her often difficult. But I knew she was being well taken care of. I still felt guilty that her family was so far away. But I was wrong, her family was not far away, you were all part of her family. You were all part of her journey. You touched her as she touched you. Of course, my immediate family, Nancy, Erin, Brian, Annie, but also Sister Rose, Sister Corina, and Sister Marie Gilligan. And in her final years, Sister Diane, Margaret Davey, Sister Liz and so many others.

I knew she was being well taken care of, but I didn't feel it until I arrived at her bedside last week. So many of you came to just sit with Kathy in her final hours, to comfort her and us, to show compassion, to pray. Then I felt it and I want to thank all of you for your love.

I choose to remember the Kathy that I saw in Sacred Heart Cathedral with a big smile on her face, not out of pride but out of joy that so many were enjoying her music and loudly singing as her song echoed throughout the nave, "Let Everything That Breathes Praise God".

Joseph (Joe) Quigley  
Sister Kathy's brother