



## Sr. Virginia Dunn SNJM

July 7, 1934 - December 27, 2018

Dunn, Virginia (Sister Ellen Dorothy), SNJM

Albany\_\_On July 7, 1934, James and Ellen Haley Dunn welcomed their first daughter, Virginia, into their loving Rome, New York, home. Then, after a life of over 84 years of selfless service, and following several battles with cancer, Sister Virginia Dunn died on December 27, 2018, at St. Peter's Hospital, Albany, NY.

After Virginia, the Dunn family eventually grew to include eight siblings, of whom the following survive Sr. Virginia: Joanne Gaffey (William, deceased); Sister Eileen Dunn, SNJM; James (Joan); Sister Mary Ann Dunn, SNJM; Michael (Colleen); Ellen Dunn; Rosi McCoy (Greg). Virginia's parents and brother Robert pre-deceased her. She is also survived by a large, multi-generational family, including 17 nieces and nephews, 33 great nieces and nephews, and 10 grand nieces and nephews. Each one held a special place in Virginia's heart.

Mrs. Dunn was the oldest of ten children, and Virginia was the clan's first grandchild. This meant that, besides being the object of much adoring attention, over time, as other babies came along, Virginia gained lots of "big sister and auntie" experience being care-giver, "mini-matriarch", and practical authority figure. Perhaps this was Virginia's first introduction to pedagogy. In any case, she had a clear, early attraction to teaching and to the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Virginia became the first of three Dunn daughters entering the community which had founded their high school, Academy of the Holy Names, Rome, NY. After graduating as class valedictorian in 1952, Virginia was off to the SNJM novitiate in Montreal, Canada.

In her early ministries, Sr. Virginia (Sister Ellen Dorothy) taught second grade in parish schools in Washington, DC, Liverpool and Delmar, NY, and in Holy Names academies in Albany and Tampa, Florida. With her second-graders, as with her own younger siblings, and even down through three generations to today's nieces and nephews, Virginia seemed to have a special charisma with young children. But, after only ten years in the classroom with these dear little ones, Virginia was summoned to ministry in administration. Her first principalship was at St. Thomas School in Delmar in 1964, followed in 1965 and later in 1990, with two more assignments as principal in Holy Names Academies in Albany.

When, in 1974, Virginia became the Superintendent of Schools for the St. Petersburg Diocese, she was well equipped for the demanding role with her calm persona and strong organizational skills. Her service as Provincial Director of the New York Province of the Sisters of the Holy Names, from 1981 to 1987, and in parish outreach at Sacred Heart Church, Albany, NY, also tapped those personal gifts.

The next occasion for SNJM community ministry was the request in 2001 that Virginia assist in the reorganization and developmental planning for the Holy Names sponsored schools. She generously worked on inter-institutional coordination and visioning for four years, and then, in 2006, Sr. Virginia moved to her last official ministry, Coordinator of Liturgy at Annunciation parish in Washington, DC. In this large active church (as in her other ministries), Virginia's skills, especially as a listener and facilitator, enriched the lives of countless individuals and directly improved the institution.

Sr. Virginia's return to the Albany area in 2017 brought her to a familiar "home base" of years of her ministry and closer to visits with her Rome-area family. In addition to the family, this time of easy connection and reflection has been a blessing to Virginia's many friends, colleagues, students, the Sisters of the Holy Names, especially her sisters, Sr. Eileen and Sr. Mary Ann, and her dear friend, Sr. Kathleen Griffin. Now we celebrate the full circle of Sr. Virginia Dunn's life: born a leader, gifted, charismatic, giving\_\_leaving a legacy of generous service, wise counsel, loving relationships, active faith. You are invited to join us as we express our gratitude to God for Virginia at a wake service on Friday evening, January 4, 2019, from 6 to 8 PM in St. Joseph's Chapel at the Holy Names Provincial House, 1061 New Scotland Rd., Albany. And the Mass of the Resurrection will be at the same location on Saturday, January 5, at 10:30 AM. Interment at Calvary Cemetery, Glenmont, NY, will follow.

If you wish, memorials in Sr. Virginia's honor may be sent to Sisters of the Holy Names, 1121 New Scotland Rd., Albany, NY 12208.

# Comments

---



“ When I think of Sister Virginia I see her smile, remember her kindness, and will always be grateful for her support during some very dark days. She was always a joy to be around, and I'm sure God feels the same now that she's home.

**Lee Fleming** - January 07, 2019 at 04:35 PM

---



“ My heartfelt sympathies go out to all of Virginia's family and friends. May she rest in peace.

Carrie Hennessy

**Carrie Hennessy** - January 04, 2019 at 06:55 PM

---



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Virginia Dunn.



January 04, 2019 at 02:39 PM

---



“ Sr. Virginia was one of the kindest, dearest people I've ever known. I'm saddened by her loss, but she's truly gone home.

**Sean** - January 03, 2019 at 07:22 AM

---



“ Sr. Virginia was my principal at Holy names, she was one of the kindest people I have ever met. She treated every student with respect and as a result she inspired us all to be kind and respectful women. I will always be so grateful to have known her and I am so sorry she is no longer with us.

**Elizabeth Reid** - January 02, 2019 at 03:50 PM