

RETURN TO GOD OF SISTER ELISABETH METAYER

6 January 1939 – 22 February 2023

Hello and welcome to you who are here to celebrate with us the return to God of our Sister Elisabeth. Her family is united to us from afar. The Marist Sisters also, throughout the world, and in particular Sister Sylvette, our Superior General, who sends us this message:

"I pray with you that Elisabeth will be enveloped in the sweetness and tenderness of the Father. She has really travelled a heavy way of the cross these last years. May the Lord welcome her into his eternal home. I am in communion of prayer with you and her family."



Gathered one last time around Elisabeth, we will give thanks for her life given to God in the Marist Sisters' family.

Elisabeth was born on 6 January 1939 in Montils in the Charente Maritime. She entered the Marist Sisters in 1963, at the age of 24 and took her first vows in 1965. After her years of religious and professional formation as a nurse, she put her talents at the service of the sick. She put her talents at the service of the sick, the young and the elderly in the various communities to which she was sent: Massabielle in Saint-Prix, Lyon, Saint-Priest, Saint-Joseph in Saint-Prix, Belley, Lyon, and again Belley where she had just completed her pilgrimage on earth.

Rather than trying to describe Elisabeth's journey during these 60 years of Marist life, I will give her the floor, through the writings that she has left us, in particular two testimonies: the first at the time of her silver jubilee in the parish of Saint-Prix in 1990, the second for her golden jubilee in the parish of Sainte Blandine in Lyon, in 2015, a testimony which could not be given, following the accident which broke her ankle and which prevented her from continuing, as much as she would have liked, her apostolate within the framework of the health ministry.

Here are some extracts of what she wanted to say: about her origins, her vocation, her mission as a Marist sister, with the sick, the young and the elderly:

From her origins: 9th of 12 children, I grew up in a united and happy family, where one has neither the time nor the means to lose oneself: work, family, concern for others fill the days and the years. My parents were able to pass on to me the love and warmth of a united Christian family, in the poverty and simplicity of country life. Together with my seven brothers and four sisters, we learned from them to serve others and to think more about others than about ourselves. Joys and sorrows also took their place: marriages, births, and deaths of a sister aged 11, and another aged 31 leaving two children - (whom Elisabeth would care for, thus delaying her entry into the novitiate by two years).

About her vocation: a Catholic Action movement helped me to grow in faith. At 18, the call to religious life resonated with me. The maturing of this call in my family was the rock on which my whole life was built. It has been the reference point and my reason for holding on in difficult times.

Marist: When I came to the Marist sisters I was attracted by the spirit of humility, simplicity, family. My way of living my Marist mission is to listen, to listen to the end, to try to understand, to get in touch if necessary, to pray. Mary teaches us how to discover the needs of all.

The community has always been for me the first place of the mission with the sharing of the life of prayer, the daily life in availability, the respect of others. I discovered the joy of being together and the need for mutual acceptance of our differences.

My mission in the service of the sick, in turn, at home, in hospital and in a retirement home

Times of care, of presence, of anguish sometimes. With the sick and their families, I have come into contact with all kinds of suffering, moral, psychological and physical. How many times I have shared with families the care of the very sick and lived with them through deaths. I am struck by the trust that is built up.

Listening is important for people who are very lonely. They express what is important to them from their past and present life. I like to find a touch of humour in the midst of the conversation that brings hope to the gravity of the situation.

This is what the mayor of Saint-Prix had to say about her in 1990, at her silver jubilee:

The many people of all ages and backgrounds who filled the old church of Saint Prix, testified that they had understood that it was the presence of Christ who had manifested himself to them through this little Marist Sister! With discretion and modesty," he added, "with perseverance and competence, what a long and unceasing series of visits to the sick and often to the dying; to young people in search of something, as well as to the elderly, so often disturbed by the too rapid evolution of the world.

In 1993, he awarded her the city medal in recognition of her services and tireless dedication:

These written records are only a glimpse of what Elisabeth wanted to pass on during her lifetime and not for her eulogy! We discover how much she was haunted by the duty to give witness to her faith and her commitment to Marist religious life. She never accepted the lack of new sisters in France.

Stricken by COVID and new health problems, it was with great reluctance that she entered the EHPAD of Bon Repos. We believe that what she has suffered since then also participates in the mission of Christ. A Marist Father sent us this message yesterday: *"Elisabeth has been faithful to her religious profession, despite her serious health problems. Together we are witnesses of a Church that is dying and living, that is being transformed ... and God can still use our faith and our poverty."*

The Lord came to get Elisabeth on Ash Wednesday, as if he were dispensing her from the new time of purification that the Lenten liturgy offers us. Here she is at once with the risen Christ. From there she watches over the whole Marist Family and in particular over the young people who are on the way to their commitment.

Bon Repos, Monday 27 February 2023 Marie-Thérèse Terra