**Eulogy for Fran Sheehey**

Good morning! On behalf of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, I would like to welcome you to the celebration of life for our Sister Francis Monica Sheehey. We want to extend our prayerful condolences to Fran’s family members who are with us today – her nieces, Francine Mitchell Canfield and her husband John and Susan Mitchell Dolan and her husband Jack. Thank you, Francie, Susan and husbands for your faithfulness to Fran!

I have been going back and forth as to how I would frame Fran’s eulogy. On Monday, the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, Fr. Xavier spoke about our individual names and how we give that name life and meaning by who we are and all that we do and don’t do. Fran loved her Baptismal name – Frances Monica – so much that she requested that it be her religious name, also. What filled Frances Monica’s name in life? This name will be on her tombstone with two significant dates - her birth on September 28, 1924 and her death January 2, 2022. Between those two dates is a dash which signifies how Fran lived and loved … how she spent her life - and it was a full one!

Fran was the youngest of seven children born to James and Agnes Sheehey of Waltham, MA. When Fran was 2 years old, her Mom died and her grandmother came to live with her dad to help raise the seven children. Fran often talked about her grandmother making all of them be responsible for some task at home and stressed the importance of work, as they grew older which remained with her for her life. She was a determined person and that was her hallmark, as we all know. Fran knew what she wanted, but it was never for herself. She was always out there for others.

She often mentioned seeing “those nuns” but having gone to public school, she didn’t know who they were, so she would cross to the other side of the street. The call was there, but this girl never was attracted to find out more about their life. After she graduated from high school, she attended Fischer School of Business and worked in the business world until she was 24 years old. It was then she took the “big leap” as she called it to find out more which led her to Allegany!

Though Fran was an excellent educator for almost 20 years, she had a yearning to be a missionary. In 1967, she went to Carmen Pampa in Bolivia where she was both principal and teacher. Health wise, she left Bolivia after three years because of the altitude and returned to the States. She put her Spanish and outstanding clerical skills to good use as a temp in several internal ministries of the Congregation.

In 1980, she returned to the Boston area and secured a secretarial position at Babson College in Wellesley, MA. She continued in this ministry for the next 14 years and served as a dedicated secretary. She had outstanding skills which were noted and applauded by the administration of Babson which she shared with me a few years back.

She terminated this position to care for her ailing sister which consumed 5 years though her sister died within the year. You see, Fran was always plotting and planning what was going to be next for her. She was calling other Sisters in the community asking if they would like to come to Cape Cod to live so that the “powers to be” would get off her back and not send her to Allegany! Of course any Sister would enjoy living at the Cape, but they had ministry and couldn’t pick up and leave.

So in 1996, she found herself a secretarial position at St. Margaret Parish in Buzzards Bay which is part of Cape Cod. Sister remained as a volunteer for 12 years until she was encouraged to come to Allegany in 2008. There were some bargaining points and one was that she could keep her car. I believe it was her sister’s…a rather large Buick. You wouldn’t see her in the car when it was coming, but you knew it was her as her speed limit was between 10-15 miles per hour. Imagine how many people in the Allegany/Olean area blessed her when they were stuck behind her! I always knew when she was out – Before renovation, the Generalate offices were on the other side of the building and when she was returning from her every day outing and was approaching the back of the house where she would take a left to put her car in the carport, she would blow the horn 3 times to warn the oncoming traffic she was coming!

Once again, Fran could not sit still so she contacted St. Bonaventure Parish and asked if they could use her secretarial skills and, of course, an office assistant with experience was always useful. So down the hill she went to share her time and talent again.

I was contacted by a former student from St. John’s in Olean questioning if there was a Sister who could serve on the board of *Every Woman’s Opportunity Center* and I immediately thought of Fran. She remained quite active on the Board once again sharing her time and talent

She also shared her skills with the Sisters and was willing to do any typing, copying etc. Every day, 2-3 times a day, she went to the office to check what she had to do. But, of course, the Sisters here at the Motherhouse were getting older and their needs drastically lessened, so the requests for her assistance lessened dramatically. So, one day in 2019 she came to me all flustered and said she was resigning as nobody needs her services any more. She said “I sit in a cold office waiting for work and no one comes, so I’m finished – I quit”. I was internally grateful as that was one less challenge I had. However, the next day when I thanked her for all that she had done, she shot back “So you’re firing me? You’re taking my office away from me?” I explained that she had resigned and she insisted she never did. Everyone she met heard the story of my firing her and now she had no office! Mind you she was almost 95!

She tended to be a collector, so emptying the office was a feat. She by day and I by night emptied the office, but hers landed in her bedroom and mine in the trash!

Fran loved a good time…I would say she was a party girl. She enjoyed her Manhattans and would always ask for one to go in a mug, so no one would know. On New Year’s Eve I brought her one in a mug and she did not know what it was. That should have been my first sign that something was not right. But, of course, she brushed me off and said she had been sleeping. The next morning when I received the call that I needed to come to her room, the Manhattan was still sitting there. I was saddened as I knew life was changing for Frances Monica.

Her dash was filled to the brim making a difference in the lives of so many for so many years and you who are here today could add more of what was contained in that little line between the birth and death of Frances Monica Sheehey. Fran, your dash is completed and you no longer have to worry about having a job or an office. So we say “well done – good and faithful servant!” You will be missed, my friend! Go in peace!

Prepared and delivered by Mary Lou Lafferty, OSF

Jan. 7, 2022