



# *Sisters of St. Casimir*

2601 WEST MARQUETTE ROAD • CHICAGO, IL 60629-1817

(773) 776-1324 • [www.sistersofstcasimir.org](http://www.sistersofstcasimir.org)

**SISTER KATHLEEN SMITH  
(formerly Sister Mary Ellen)  
December 14, 1941 – July 14, 2021**

Sister Kathleen was born December 14, 1941, to Michael Joseph and Ray Pauline Smith in Chicago, IL. Her sister Desly was born eight years earlier and they remained close throughout their lives. Sister Kathleen attended a public school for the primary grades, while also attending CCD classes at St. Adrian Parish. She came to know the Sisters of St. Casimir when she attended Maria High School. The transition from a public school to Maria was difficult for her but made more possible by Sister Edith Alice whose kindness and understanding helped her immensely. At various times at Maria, Sister Kathleen was drawn to becoming part of the community but was not sure. When the school newspaper featured an article and a picture of Mother Maria Kaupas, the foundress of the Sisters of St. Casimir, she said there was “something about the expression on her face that spoke to her.” This confirmed her decision.



Sister Kathleen entered in 1959, made first vows in 1962 and perpetual vows in 1967. She had the joy of celebrating her Silver Jubilee in 1987 and her Golden Jubilee in 2012.

Throughout the time of her ministry, Sister Kathleen received a B.S. degree in Elementary Education from DePaul University, an M. Ed. in Education Administration from Loyola University, a Masters in Pastoral Spirituality, as well as Art Studies at the University of Illinois and the Art Institute of Chicago. All of these enhanced her years of ministry and provided opportunities to develop her artistic talent and teaching skills.

Sister Kathleen began her ministry in teaching first and second grades at St. Peter and Paul School in Chicago, St Anthony School in Cicero, IL, St. John Vianney School in St. Paul, MN, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Cleveland, OH, and St. Casimir School in Los Angeles CA. Recalling these early years of teaching primary grades, she said what brought her joy was seeing how the little first graders learned to read, spell, write and do math.

In 1977 Sister Kathleen was assigned to Maria High School and remained there until 1995, teaching art. Speaking of her career in art, she wrote the following, "A blessing in my life has been my gift for artistic creativity. The very process of art makes one sensitive to details in God's creation - color, form, shape provide beauty in the simplest situation. Being able to develop this in students and adults is immediately rewarding."

Among the memorable experiences at Maria was when her students entered the Chicago City Vehicle Sticker Contest. A sticker designed by a Maria student was chosen five different years. It was wonderful to see that the creativity of her students was so appreciated. Sister Kathleen's love for art inspired some of her students to choose teaching and art as a career. It was always a great joy and a blessing for her to learn how her students had continued their lives, to know that they had benefitted from her teaching.

Another opportunity to teach art full time presented itself to Sister Kathleen when she had received a special assignment to care for her mother who was ill. She was hired for a position at Michigan Catholic Middle and High School in St. Joseph, Michigan. One year the town initiated a project called "Horses on the Beach" to entice tourism to the area. The city purchased fifty-three blank white carousel horses that needed to be repaired and decorated for display throughout the city. Sister Kathleen's students were asked to work on the one to be placed outside the post office, the horse appropriately named "Stamp-ed". Under her direction, the young artists molded and decorated the horse with a great display of creativity.

Sister Kathleen brought a wealth of experience to her role as an art teacher. In addition to teaching art, she was often asked to prepare a painting, and to design logos, pamphlets, illuminated manuscripts for awards, and banners (many of which were carried in procession during school liturgies, community celebrations, and a special liturgical celebration at Soldier Field). Sister Kathleen had a great love for Mother Maria. Included among her artwork were numerous paintings of Mother Maria at different stages of her life. For the community's

Diamond Jubilee, she created a shadow box display of photos of Mother Maria's life that enhanced the special milestone of the community founding.

In addition to her artistic talent, Sister Kathleen also had special skills in sewing and in preparing meals. Many Sisters remember the snowfall of 1978 when everything came to a standstill for several days, forcing everyone to stay indoors. Leave it to Sister Kathleen to relieve some of the "cabin fever" by setting up Maria convent's dining room as an Italian restaurant, complete with dim lighting, candles, checkered tablecloths, and a delicious spaghetti dinner.

Although most of Sister Kathleen's ministry was in education, at one point, having completed Pastoral Spirituality, she volunteered time at Holy Cross Hospital in the Pastoral Care Department.

As the community made difficult decisions regarding the Motherhouse and a new place to call "home," Sister Kathleen and Sister Wanda who was living with her in Michigan moved to Franciscan Village. The last few years of Sister Kathleen's life were very difficult due to major changes in her health. She was lovingly cared for by her good friend, Sister Wanda, as well as other Sisters and personnel of Franciscan Village who attended to her needs in various ways.

At the time of her Golden Jubilee, Sister Kathleen said that throughout her life she was inspired by many Sisters and other people, by "their unpretentious dedication, kindness, behind the scenes work, and their ready support when needed. They reinforced my own values and thinking."

We are grateful to God for Sister Kathleen and the many talents God gave her. May she now enjoy the fullness of life and peace in God's presence forever.

One of Sister Kathleen's paintings on the right.  
Words around the circle: ***Be still and listen for the beating of my wings and my breath upon you. Take comfort on my loving breast.***

Words at bottom of painting:

***Dance your wing-dance in my soul...***

***brush my face with your wings***

***Let your wing-rush roar in my heart.***





Sister Kathleen was preceded in death by her parents, Michael Joseph Smith and Ray Pauline Smith, her sister, Desly Janis, brother-in-law, Ronald Janis, and two nieces.

She is survived by many nieces, a nephew, grandnieces, grandnephews, and the Sisters of St. Casimir.

Living member of Sister Kathleen's Profession Class:  
Sister Sylvia Puchoras

**Visitation, Wake Service, Mass of the Resurrection**

Thursday, July 22, 2021  
Franciscan Village Chapel  
1270 Village Drive  
Lemont, IL 60439

**Visitation:** 10:30 a.m.

**Wake Service:** 11:15 a.m.

**Mass of the Resurrection:** 11:30 a.m.

Celebrant: Rev. Bob Lucas, CM

Organist: Gia Sokas

**Interment:** Saint Casimir Cemetery

