TRIBUTE TO SISTER MARY K

Good morning and welcome to Sister Mary K’s family, friends, colleagues, students, teachers, and community. We are here in gratitude today to pay tribute to a woman who touched all of our lives so deeply. There were so many life lessons we were given by Sister Mary K. Devotion, discipline, and her constant faith were at the center of all she did. She taught us the fundamentals of respect and loving one another. Thanks to Sister Mary K’s presence for 25 years, thousands of students were able to learn, thrive, and go out and change the world.

As evidence of her deep devotion to the students, she greeted them every morning at their arrival, and was there again on the stairs when they left for the day. She was at school each morning long before the rest of us, and locked it up each night (usually after a meeting) before walking across the parking lot to home.

We have all had a few weeks now to reflect upon the life of a “humble powerhouse”, and we marvel at all that she did. Perhaps everyone’s favorite memory of Sister Mary K was the fact that every single grading quarter, she met with each individual student to review the report cards. She cared about Effort and Behavior as
much as the grades. We parents knew that the impact of Sister Mary K’s words had much greater weight than anything that might be said at home. So thank you, Sister Mary K, for your inspirational words to our children!

Rich Majcin was her assistant principal for many years. He and Sister usually conferred early each morning (either before or after 6:45 mass) since that was the time that both of them had a moment of peace. Rich remembered when the Office of Catholic Schools wanted Sister to become the Superintendent for the Archdiocese. She thought and prayed very hard about it, but she also knew in the end that her true devotion was to the students of St. Francis. And so she stayed. It was our good fortune.

Celebrations are part of every school year, and there were many at St. Francis that continue today thanks to Sister. The Halloween party, the St. Patrick’s Day party, May Crowning, Field Day, and of course Follow the Star, which Sister brought to St. Francis, were always highlights for the students and their families. But what made Sister happiest were the “every day” moments in the life of a school. How she loved the First Day of School! There was such an excitement about greeting the students, seeing how
they had grown over the summer, starting a new grade, meeting new friends and teachers. And how many of us remember the main question asked if there was ever an altercation at lunchtime or on the playground? She did not want to know what the “other” person did. Her question was always, “What did you do?”

Indeed, Sister had many other famous sayings. Every year at the Back to School dinner, she reminded us how important it was to have the family together for dinner each night. She wanted us to start our sentences with an “I” and “own” the behavior. And woe to the child who just happened to be “sitting on the stairs” if his or her mother stopped by the school. As the fraught parent would run into the office to see what her darling had done, Sister’s reply was, “You do not need to know. That is between your child and me.”

And if any of us were facing a difficult situation, Sister always reminded us that even Jesus only got 11 of the 12. But she was even more well known for what she did not say. For no one could silence a room with a single look like Sister Mary K. could!

Many families came to St. Francis because of Sister Mary K. They had respect for her discipline, and they were so grateful for her commitment to the students and their education. Perhaps the
most impressive legacy is the fact that countless alumni have returned to the school as parents and grandparents. They want that same experience for their own children. As we begin Catholic Schools Week, perhaps this is an appropriate moment to thank all of the religious who devoted their lives to Catholic education. So many of us were blessed by their presence, guidance, and intelligence. Catholic education as we know it today was built on the backs of giants.

I believe I speak for all of us when I say how deeply grateful we are that Sister Mary K was such a memorable and influential force in our lives. “City of God” was one of her favorite songs, and it was sung at many of our school masses. Sister Mary K built a City of God for all of us right here at 9th and Linden. Thank you Sister, for educating us, guiding us, inspiring us, and loving us. Our tears will be turned into dancing….Thank you for turning our Night into Day!