

Faine McMullen, RSCJ
January 18, 1914-December 27, 2015

Faine Moira McMullen, third of five children of John R. and Anna T. Dunne McMullen, was born in Far Rockaway, Queens, New York. Her father John McMullen was a New York attorney who, with his wife, raised a profoundly Christian family. The only other girl, Grail, born four years later, also entered the Society, but five years earlier. Two brothers, Anthony and Aidan, later became Jesuits and both taught in Jesuit colleges. Another, Brendan, became a Dominican and parish pastor. A fourth brother, Declan, the only one not to enter religious life, founded a publishing house.

Faine was educated in a private Catholic high school, and then attended the College of Mount Saint Vincent-on-the-Hudson, graduating in 1934 at the age of twenty with a major in History and minor in French. Following the path of her father, she went on to Fordham University School of Law, graduating and admitted to the bar in New York State in 1937. She practiced law for seven years, three of them in work with her father, the other four with the legal section of the U.S. Army during World War II, drawing up ordnance contracts. But "the love of God, of truth, of service" was calling. She entered the Society in 1944, five years after Grail, and remarked in an autobiographical document that "every transition since then has been easy in comparison!" Under the guidance first of Mother Agnes Barry, then of Marie Louise Schroen, she made first vows on July 31, 1947. The next years were spent as assistant treasurer at Newton Academy and teacher of elementary and secondary classes at Eden Hall in Philadelphia. She began probation at Via Nomentana, Rome with Reverend Mother Zurstrassen in October, 1953 and made final vows on February 10, 1954.

After probation, she went to Newton College as assistant professor of Political Science for the next thirteen years. In 1954, she earned a M.A. in History from Manhattanville College and began also teaching courses in History at Newton College. It was this experience during years of social upheaval in the world and the Society, and the call of Vatican II for the Church to be more part of the suffering world, that formed in her a conviction that Sacred Heart education was not contributing adequately to the kinds of social change that needed to happen. She determined to touch more directly and personally the lives of the poor. In 1967, she asked for two years of exclaustation "for the purpose of devoting all my time and energy and personal presence and witness in a situation which will identify me directly and absolutely with the poor." She was granted one year of exclaustation by explicit approval of Reverend Mother de Valon in 1967, with a later renewal for six months by Reverend Mother Bultó in 1968. During this time, she lived alone in Roxbury, an economically depressed area of Boston, and worked for the Boston Department of Health and Hospitals. She later recalled: "I studied the poor who surrounded me; I grew to love them and ever since their problems have been mine."

In 1967, the first year of her Roxbury pilgrimage, she began correspondence with Jacques Travers, a French professor at Brooklyn College, artist, disciple of Dorothy Day, member of the Catholic Worker, and founder of a house to welcome the homeless. Their twenty years of correspondence ended with his death in France from cancer at the age of 62, in 1987. It was a deep, personal, and apostolic friendship. She kept his letters for the rest of her life.

She returned to Newton College in 1969 "a different person," feeling reinvigorated for the mission, and continued to teach there for the next five years. At the same time, she co-founded with Father Michael Groden the Planning Office of Urban Affairs for the Boston Archdiocese. During these years in Boston, Faine came to be accepted into a group of social activists thirty years younger than she in East Boston. She would come to share meals with them, often bringing beer or wine. She listened to

them and challenged them with her own probing questions. She later participated in the wedding of one of them.

With the closure of Newton College, Faine moved in 1974 to the Sursum Corda community in Washington, DC. She was admitted to the bar in the District of Columbia and worked as a staff attorney at University Legal Services, an agency that provided free legal services to the poor. It was exhausting work, and in 1983 she moved to the 6200 Sheridan Road community in Chicago to serve as a volunteer at the Howard Area Community Center's free legal services. In 1985, an invitation to direct a program for the empowerment of low-income seniors brought her to the Napoleon community in New Orleans for a three-year contract as director of the Senior Advocacy Program for the Archdiocese. The program addressed issues such as housing and discounts for seniors on public transportation. By 1988, she needed time off to rest and took a year away, but returned in 1990 to New Orleans as a parish volunteer in senior advocacy work, until 1993, when she moved to the Pax Christi community at Kenwood, then to Teresian House in 2007.

In her retirement, she continued to read, think, and stay informed about the issues of poverty and homelessness to which she had dedicated so much of her effort in earlier years. She died quietly on December 27, on the third anniversary of Grail's funeral, less than a month short of her 102nd birthday.

Her funeral on January 15 was celebrated by Kenwood's steadfast chaplain, Father Chris deGiovine. In the eulogy, her longtime friend Phil Giffey, one of the East Boston young adult group and now Executive Director of Neighborhood of Affordable Housing, East Boston, gave an inspiring portrait of a courageous woman who thought deeply and acted on her convictions, who was "curious, thoughtful and accepting, but she also had her opinions. I think she was attracted to our menagerie because we were an uncloaked embodiment of her own search for justice, community, 'faith' and activism on behalf of the poor." After the funeral, her friends gathered for sharing of memories. Her ashes were taken to the Kenwood cemetery the same day, where they now rest with Grail and her other RSCJ sisters.

Sr Faine McMullen, RSCJ

January 18, 1914 – December 27, 2015

Professed, February 10, 1954

It is an honor to be asked to participate in this sacred service for our friend.

The world in 1914 was not as we know it today in 2016. Here are a few reminders of what it was like a century ago.

- World War I began in July 1914, about six months after Faine was born. More than 9 million combatants died. It was also the beginning of the worldwide flu pandemic which killed 50M
- The IRS issued the first income tax form, the 1040.
- The Panama Canal opened on August 5th. It took 34 years to build and cost over 27,000 workers their lives.
- The first traffic light was installed in Cleveland, Ohio on August 1914.
- In 1914, only about 13% of students earned a high school diploma, and less than 3% earned a Bachelor's; today 81% graduate HS, some college is about 58%. Thank you to all you 2,200 RSCJ's who are teaching!!
- In 1910, there were twice as many Irish living in NYC as there were in Dublin
- Average life expectancy for men was 52 years and nearly 57 for women.
- Women could not yet vote. In 2015 appx 58% voted. In either case, Faine would not be happy!



Since Faine lived to nearly 102, there are more than a few things to say about her. And, since I *know* she is listening, I want to assure her now, they are mostly good Faine, nothing to worry about! Please do not interrupt me.....

Eulogy - Philip Giffey, Executive Director¹ of NOAH

She wrote in a brief bio to the Ventures Program in 1989, "I do not know what is next – nor am I at all concerned. Life or death, work or rest, it's all in the Lord's hands." After nearly 102 years of work and rest, Faine Moira McMullen, your devoted companion and sister, our dear and affectionate friend, now rests in the hands of the Lord. 'Deo Gracias,' Sr. Joan Gannon, wrote to inform me of Faine's passing at 4:09 on December 27th. I was blessed to be with Faine the day before. I *think* she held my hand. I know she would not let it go when a nurse came in. I *think* she heard my voice because I think she opened her eye to see me. I *hope* she knew how much I loved her, you loved her, we all loved her. Sr. Joan said she did indeed know, which is a blessing. I think Faine's story is not just her story though, it is a story of a Great Religious Generation, less celebrated than Tom Brokaw's famous book, but generous, kind, wise and courageous nonetheless. Let me say more as I conclude.

I had the great good fortune of meeting and growing to know Faine beginning in 1971 through her work at the Planning Office for Urban Affairs in Boston, a node of Catholic activism she co-founded with Fr. Michael Groden, a young, energetic, Vatican II inspired priest. POUA was an outgrowth of the call of Vatican II to go out into the world and be among the people, specifically to build affordable housing and work on educational issues in Boston, especially in Boston's poorer neighborhoods. Mike and Faine somehow connected to form this mission-driven Catholic enterprise, which had the blessing of the Cardinal. Mike focused on projects and politics while Faine, being the organized attorney and teacher she had been for decades, focused on Admin matters. Mike brought financial resources and connections to the enterprise; Faine brought her diligent, structured thinking and persistent passion. To their mutual credit, POUA thrives today and is still a highly valued, influential entity in Greater Boston and works closely with Boston's Cardinals on housing affordability issues.

In January 1971, I had just been granted Conscientious Objector status by my draft board in Wellesley, MA. It was a decision that has shaped my life. I know I stand on the shoulders of many who went before me. As a CO, I had to go find a community service job instead of going to war in Viet Nam. A fellow grad student referred me to POUA where I met Mike and Faine. Mike took me in as an employee of sorts and sent me to East Boston where I have lived and/or worked ever since. I then joined up with a group of like-minded acquaintances. Led by a bushy haired friend and named Mossik, a clear, idealistic thinker with whom Faine had already developed a famous repartee, we bought a small three-decker with the resources of a uniquely remarkable friend of Mossik, Larry Braman, who had been paralyzed after a diving accident. Faine often crossed the Harbor and met us where we were, a half dozen to a dozen, long-haired mix of young men and women living in a faded, narrow, thoroughly unattractive building in the middle of a working-class neighborhood, struggling to beat off the encroachments and arrogance of dated officials and Logan International Airport in order to build the world anew. Of course, we're still trying!

As you well know, Faine was curious, thoughtful and accepting, but she also had her opinions. I think she was attracted to our menagerie because we were an uncloaked embodiment of her own search for justice, community, 'faith' and activism on behalf of the poor. Plus, we enjoyed a good mix of fun, a little wine and some pretty good food. Though 30+ years our elder, she came to be part of us. She listened to our ambitious social theories and in her own respectful, probing and value-centered way, would question or challenge us. None, outside of myself in our Collective had a formal 'faith'. In fact, formal devotion was actively pooh-poohed, though she knew at our core, our values were those of the Gospel. That is what bound us to her. We were her, but a little younger. Her, but a little more 'out there.' Her, but without the Lord as our organizing principle. It was not a clash of values, but a blend of principles, ideals, ethics and hope. In addition, we were an intentional community. Ours may have been a bit non-conformist, while Faine's were more traditional. Regardless, both fused people with principles.

Faine lived in community nearly all of her life, some small, like Sursum Corda, some larger, like Sacred Heart College or here at Teresian. Her first community of course, was her loving Irish McMullen family of New York-four boys, two girls.

Her father, John, was an attorney. Anna Dunn, her mother, must have been very strong. They both must have been special people because three, Aiden, Anthony and Brendan became priests while Grail and Faine also professed. Declan, of course, married and I am sure some of you here are glad he did! How did this minor-miracle of familial piety and service happen? She wrote, "My parents had a profound Christian faith and Christian values. Their love of God, of truth, of service, of the arts and beauty of nature were absorbed by their children." One can only imagine how much Grace the world has received through the McMullens' collective service! We thank them all now. Faine absorbed not only her parents' loving faith, but also their intellectual prowess. I am not sure how many women of that era were able to choose a business or professional life, but Faine made it her way. She graduated from college at 20 and became an attorney at 23. For seven years, she practiced law with either her father or worked with the military to purchase materials during WWII.

However, as she was working and maturing, something was going on inside her. Though NYC was a big city with plenty to absorb a young woman's attention, 'the love of God, of truth, of service' was calling. She listened. At 30, in 1944, she enrolled as an RSCJ at Kenwood, your beautiful community down the River. (I believe her younger sister, Grail, had professed at Kenwood the year before). It was not a long ride up the Hudson, but it apparently was not so straightforward because she wrote, 'Every transition since then has been easy in comparison.' Faine was not impetuous, so she must have prayed often, even struggled, long into the night about her perceived calling.

After her commitment to become an RSCJ, she taught in RSCJ schools for nearly 23 years. Then amidst the tumult of the 60's and the Aggiornamento of Vatican II, she again experienced her own internal turbulence so in 1967, she took a formal leave from the Order to live alone among the poor in Boston. We remember the 60's were a massive collision of values. Something 'New' was emerging from within the confines of 'the Old'. Amidst the civil rights struggles, the war and other social/cultural changes, many younger people were essentially searching for Truth and Justice. So was Faine and I am sure many of you here as well. In a 1966 letter in the Newton College newspaper, just before she took her leave, she wrote, 'History is the assault of the future upon the past..... And the point of collision is the present. ...Where the future collides with the past, the war on poverty is present, not full blown but much talked about and yet scarcely initiated. Likewise the threat of racial violence, bloodshed andprolonged revolution combines with the promise of peaceful integration and economic and cultural enrichment to redeem the American past of racial injustice and to generate the civil rights revolution with its fruits of laws, decisions, economic and social accommodations.' In too many quarters of our blessed but anxious nation, this is too often still the case. Faine knew this to be true for our Church as well. She also wrote, "Before Vatican II, the meaning and mission of the Church was in danger of being altogether lost, not only on the vast, manipulated masses but especially on thinking people as well." I can only surmise the need for her search, but I have to think it was to experience the world, to listen to the Word of God - unfiltered. It must have benefitted. After her year and a half year examination, she exclaimed 'I studied the poor who surrounded me. I grew to love them and ever since, their problems have been mine.'

That experience first took her back to the classroom, "re-energized," she pronounced. "I returned to the beauty of our College campus in 1969 a different person. I had been touched." The exclaustation, or excursion, then led her to Fr. Mike and the co-founding of POUA as well as to those scruffy, idealists at 112 Trenton in East Boston; then to the practice of poverty law at Sursum Corda in Washington; then to the creation of parks and community development projects at the Howard Park/Triangle neighborhood in Chicago; then to advocacy for low income seniors and transportation changes in the Province of New Orleans. However, "By August of 1988," she wrote, "I was used up." Tiredness brought her back to Kenwood for "a year of renewal to rest, pray, read, reflect, exercise etc." The 'etcetera' took another 27 years where she lived at Kenwood, then Teresian House with her sister Grail, and now, finally full-circle, back to Kenwood. Fortunately, her faith-filled choices along the way led her to you, to the poor, my friends, to me, my family, and to all of us.

What I have highlighted are only some historical markers for Faine. They say what she did, not who she was, to which I would like to add a few elements. Faine was:

- **Smart:** look at all those degrees, esp being a female attorney in the Depression! Amazing. 'A legend,' I think I heard Sr. Joan refer to her as one of her novice teachers. Her academic bio is serious: Instructor of History and Lecturer in Political Science at Newton College of the Sacred Heart; BA College of Mt St. Vincent; LL.B or lawyer from Fordham University; and, an MA in History, Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart.
- **Inquisitive and Up to date:** she loved to read books and had her own significant library which adorned her room till she moved to Teresian House. She would always leave me with one or more as I left after each visit. She would also read the NY Times till she could not concentrate anymore.
- **Open:** she embraced the group we assembled in East Boston with open arms, just as she did the poor in Roxbury. She would often come for dinner bringing beer or wine – and yes, she'd drink a wee bit.
- **Thoughtful:** she would always ask about my family, my brothers and sisters, parents and those close to us. She would keep letters and re-read them before I came in order to brush up on names and other matters. I loved her beautiful, handwritten letters.
- **Understated:** one of her finest and perhaps most renown qualities was her playful ability to joust and parry with words, thoughts, issues, even as she was growing increasingly deaf. It was hard to get the best of her, and she gave as well as she got! To her credit, she never used words to hurt. She was never trying to one-up you. Rather, she was always trying to open you up. And, she was fun!
- **True Friend:** She read the Prayers of the Faithful at Nancy and my wedding and was the god-mother to our son, Justin. If she knew you, she would say goodbye with both of her hands on your face, say some kind words or a prayer, and give you a big smooch on your forehead!! I'll miss that.
- **Prayerful:** she removed the habit, but she never removed the cross. Even after her exclaustation, she chose to be 'in the world, but not of the world.' Let me apologize for some weak attempts at theology. She was an RSCJ, she was a teacher, but when she left temporarily, she came back to see the world again from a different vantage point. 'She left in order to be sent back in' as many authors have written.
She wasn't casual about her faith. I know I would call at various times and was not able to reach her because she was in Matins, Lauds, Compline or some such. She served at Mass. She and Grail set the altar. She was reverent. She protected her faith and the Lord in her gentle way when some made light of or dismissed God or her faith. However, I believe our EB group respected her for her gentle, non-threatening, non-proselytizing defenses.
- **To Conclude:** What I want to say now though is not just about Faine. It is about You, especially the religious, this lovely place and the generous communities to which she entered, lived, was nurtured, educated, served the Lord, matured, retired and passed away. Each of the times my family or I have visited Teresian House or Kenwood, or Sacred Heart or any of the smaller religious communities in which I visited, I have been welcomed graciously, enthusiastically, cheerfully and with open arms. I, and so many other of God's people been hugged, fed, kissed, complimented, blessed and prayed for. Perhaps examples of heaven on earth!
So, I cannot leave here without saying Thank You to Faine, Grail, Joan, Fr. Chris and so many others of you in religious communities, including my good and deceased friend, Fr. Gerry Bolduc, an Oblate, who have, in the name of God, showed us God's face through the wonderful examples and works of your precious lives. Whether *the Society of the Sacred Heart, or the Oblates, or the many other religious orders which have gifted us by making known the revelation of God's love, whose source and symbol is for you RSCJ's the Heart of Christ, I say Thank you. God bless you, your communities, your work and the lives of the people you are yet to reach.*
- As Faine often said, 'It's been a joy!' *May God bless us all. Amen.*

Sister Faine, 101, Advocate for the Poor

Sister Faine Moira McMullen, R.S.C.J., a native of New York who was a co-founder of the Planning Office of Urban Affairs for the Archdiocese of Boston, died Dec. 27 at Teresian House, the Society of the Sacred Heart's elder care community in Albany. She was 101.

She served in the Planning Office of Urban Affairs for the Archdiocese of Boston, 1969-1973.

She was active in creating the Triangle Park in Chicago, which converted city property into a private park and playground in a poor area of the city, where she had moved in 1983. She served as director of the Senior Advocacy Program for low-income elderly in New Orleans, 1985-1988.

In 1974, she moved to the impoverished neighborhood of Sursum Corda

in Washington, D.C., where she provided free legal services to the poor.

Her early years were spent teaching in Sacred Heart schools, including teaching political science at Newton College in Boston. In her later years, she continued to work with poor seniors on issues such as transportation and public housing.

Born in New York, she entered the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1944 and professed final vows 10 years later.

She earned a law degree from Fordham University, a master's in history from Manhattanville College and a bachelor's in history from the College of Mount St. Vincent.

A Funeral Mass was offered Jan. 4 at the Teresian House chapel. Burial was in the Society of the Sacred Heart cemetery at Kenwood.

CATHOLIC NEW YORK - 21 JANUARY 2016

Faine Moira McMullen RSCJ

January 04, 2016

I have known Sr. Faine for the past 2 years, as she lived on the same unit as my mother. With all who have had the good fortune to know Sr. Faine, and with her remaining family, I share my condolences. Though I will always miss her terribly, I am richer in spirit for having had the pleasure of her friendship. She stands out among all the people I have known, as she was possessed of a keen intelligence, more grace than I've ever seen in one person, and a stamina which still astounds me. Whenever her name is mentioned, the sentiments are similar. Her dignity, wisdom, rectitude, grace, capacity for affection, generosity and keen humor have inspired those who have known her. Having been deaf for many years, Sr. Faine nonetheless maintained a lively communication with those who sought her company. Communicating via written notes, gestures, smiles, and lighthearted blown kisses, it seemed one always came away with an uplifted spirit. I am full of gratitude and she lives in my heart always.

Susan Walter
(Janice's daughter)
Schenectady, New York

January 01, 2016

Faine was a shining light, a passionate, brilliant, kind, gentle soul - an extraordinary woman I had the great privilege to know. She lived down the hall from my mother at the Teresian House and never missed an opportunity to greet us with enthusiasm and love. She liked to joke and tease, as well, demonstrating her love for people and her vigorous vitality.

God never loved me in so sweet a way before.
'Tis He alone who can such blessings send.
And when His love would new expressions find,
He brought thee to me and He said --
"Behold a friend."

I will miss you dearly, Faine. Sincere condolences to your wonderful family and all who love you,

Nannette Dusseault
(Janice's daughter)