



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PO BOX 100 OLDENBURG, IN 47036
WWW.OLDENBURGFRAUCISCANS.ORG



April 28, 2022

Dear Sisters and Associates, Co-workers, Family and Friends,

S. ELNA STEMANN, OSF

Without warning, as another beautiful spring day began, our beloved S. Elna Stemann let go of her earthly life on Thursday, April 28 and emerged into the glorious presence of the Risen Jesus. How fitting is this season of rebirth for one so immersed in the loveliness of nature, God's dwelling place with us!

Louise Ann Stemann was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 15, 1937, the second child of Louis and Mary Engman Stemann. "One could say I was born a Franciscan," Elna wrote. "Baptized at St. Clement parish in St. Bernard, OH by a Franciscan priest gave me a good start. Attending the parish school and being taught by our Sisters from K through 8 had me on my way. I believe my vocation began in third grade where I helped S. Alverna Chandler work in the church grotto as I swept and cleaned vigil lights. It was a very special time for me. I also liked staying after school and helping my teachers", including S. Antoinette with sacristy duties.

After attending Our Lady of Angels High School, St. Bernard, as a freshman, Elna and two classmates – Virginia Kistner (S. Amy) and Ann Driscoll (S. Lucy)-- were accepted into the Juniorate (Aspirancy) at Oldenburg. The following year, another classmate, Rose Jaehnen (S. Tecla) "saw how happy we were" and joined the group.

Family was central to Elna's appreciation of life. She warmly described her mother as "wonderful"—"always there for us when we came home for lunch and after school to share our day." Her dad, a St. Bernard fire fighter, was fun-loving and an avid story teller. "My brother, Bud (Louis) was the oldest; we were four years apart. Later came my sister, Carla, when I was six years old. We were great playmates. When I was 12 my brother, Jim, was born. Caring for him was my great delight. Taking him for walks in the stroller and rocking him to sleep was my joy." She recalled the pleasures of growing up in St. Bernard, the summer activities of baseball, Fourth of July fireworks, and swimming in the playground pools. Her spiritual life was nourished early by the many religious activities at St. Clement parish.

Just so, her love of nature was instilled in her formative years. "Early memories include seeing the dew sparkling like rainbows in the grass. . . We had Rose of Sharon bushes and lilacs in the side yard which always made for a May altar in our home. Playing under these large shrubs was a cool spot to be for a little girl on hot afternoons."

Following her Novitiate training, Elna began a 31-year career in the classroom. Her first class at St. Michael School in Brookville, IN consisted of 49 second -grade students. Her teaching experiences with primary students were also learning ones, ending with her assignment at Holy Family School in Oldenburg. "My years there were rich, respected as the senior and most experienced teacher. The principal would often send teachers to me for advice and suggestions. I also served as a Master Teacher for young women seeking employment as teachers," Elna recounted. "During those years I was the only Sister still teaching in what was a public school, now called Oldenburg Elementary. I was pleased to be the last of our Sisters teaching in the school Mother Theresa had founded."

Besides teaching, Elna responded to other meaningful ways to serve. For four years, she was a core member of the Community's House of Prayer, known as "House of Resurrection", in Cincinnati. She spent several summers at St. Vincent Orphanage in Vincennes, IN, "privileged to take care of the nursery" there. In 1992, Elna took on the double responsibility of Manager of Campus Grounds and Sacristan—both of which brought her joy. In the early stages, she partnered with S. Cecilia Schroeder in grounds-keeping and with S. Teresa Carol von Compennolle in the sacristy. Together with S. Celie, she created many flower beds to add natural beauty to the campus. Assisted by S. "TC", much cleaning and polishing of altar fixtures were undertaken that had not been previously managed. Elna also enjoyed a "mothering" role with S. "TC" during this time as they provided care for the four Lamping boys.

Then, in 2004, Elna was asked to move to Evansville and serve as a companion to S. Jane McConnell, who ministered as chaplain at St. Vincent Hospital there. “Imagine being asked to go and live with one’s best friend. We had been teaching partners many years ago at Holy Family School... now, we would be together again,” Elna noted. Not satisfied with just housekeeping for Jane, Elna embraced a new ministry opportunity that brought fresh delight—taking care of toddlers and infants in her home. “I must say this became my favorite ministry,” Elna revealed. “Caring for these little ones and letting them ‘come to me’ was joy and blessing.” When no longer needed in this capacity, Elna became a volunteer at the hospital. Once again, Elna found satisfaction in the tasks of organizing and arranging as the clerical duties required.

In November, 2018, Elna returned to the Motherhouse in retirement. Her days were filled with reading, praying, and visiting the Sisters in St. Clare Hall. “I am most blessed to have such a warm, loving home for my final years,” she stated. “I am most grateful for the care we receive from our lay staff members.”

Summarizing her own life, Elna revealed, “I never expected to be a teacher. I really wanted to take care of toddlers and infants in an orphanage. I finally got that wish. I wanted to be a housekeeper; I finally got that wish. I wanted to be a contemplative, and now in my years at the Burg I am getting that wish.”

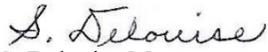
Elna’s delight in nature never left her. While she remembered her mother being terrified of thunderstorms, she herself found them “exciting”. An experience she had during her teaching years reiterates that love: “There was a day when I was on playground duty and something overwhelmed me. I looked up at the bluest sky and felt the gentle warmth of the sun and was unaware of anything else around me. I felt I could not leave this beautiful Earth for any reason but to see the Face of God.”

As Elna now looks upon the face of God, we thank her for the gift of her Franciscan presence in our Community, of service in our beautiful world. We extend our sympathy to her sister Carla, her brother, James, and all her relatives, classmates, and friends. We thank our pastoral care and nursing care staff for the love and support with which you surrounded Elna’s life.

On this, her day of passing, we use the words of e.e. cummings, so loved by Elna, to express this sacred moment of Elna’s unity with God and all of creation:

*“I thank you God for this most amazing day, for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a true blue dream of sky; and for everything which is natural which is infinite which is yes.”*

In the joy of Christ Risen,


S. Delouise Menges
for the General Council

SISTER ELNA (Louise Ann) STEMANN, OSF

Birth: September 15, 1937

Entrance into Religious Life: February 2, 1955

Entrance into Eternal Life: April 28, 2022

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. ELNA SERVED:

1956-1957 St. Michael, Brookville IN

1957-1962 St. Mary, Rushville IN

1962-1964 St. Francis de Sales, Indianapolis IN

1964-1967 St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford IN

1967-1973 St. Gabriel, Indianapolis IN

1973-1976 St. Mary, New Albany IN

1976-1980 House of Prayer, Cincinnati OH

1980-1991 Holy Family Parish, Oldenburg IN

1991-1992 Professional Sabbatical

1992-2003 Motherhouse (Landscape)

1995-2003 Sacristan, Motherhouse

2003-2004 Personal Growth Program

2004-2010 Infant Caregiver, Evansville IN

2010-2018 St. Mary’s Hospital Volunteer, Evansville IN

2018-2019 Prayer and Presence, Evansville IN

2019-2022 Motherhouse, Oldenburg IN

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Weigel Funeral Home – visit their website to view Sister’s online memorial, and if desired, an online condolence may be left on the site to share with her family and the Franciscan Sisters – www.Weigelfh.com

Memorial Donations in Sister’s memory may be given online at www.OldenburgFranciscans.org