

Sister Maureen Crowley

“I love to see the light go on in their eyes.”

If you look up the term “educator” in the dictionary, you find definitions such as “one who provides instruction” or “a student of the theory of education.” These definitions are wholly inadequate when it comes to Sister Maureen Crowley. She is perhaps the quintessential educator, an educator to the core of her being. As an educator and a Sister of Charity, Sister Maureen has had a profound impact on innumerable students who have been forever changed because she challenged, inspired, and loved them.

Maureen Crowley was born in Montclair, New Jersey. She attended Immaculate Conception School throughout her elementary and high school years, and almost all of her teachers were Sisters of Charity. She recalls, “The Sisters of Charity were wonderful, and I wanted to become a teacher because of them. It seemed like a natural progression for me.” After graduation from high school, Maureen enrolled in Newark State College to begin her teacher training. “I lasted a year until I realized I needed to listen to the voice that had been speaking to me since I was young. The Sisters of Charity were to be my life.”

Maureen entered the Sisters of Charity in September, 1957 and completed her undergraduate degree at the College of Saint Elizabeth with a major in history. She was thrilled to begin her ministry as an educator by teaching the sixth grade at Sacred Heart School in Vailsburg, New Jersey. From there, Sister Maureen was assigned to teach sixth grade at Our Lady Help of Christians School in East Orange.

In 1968, Sister Maureen was appointed to serve as Principal at Sacred Heart School in Bloomfield. During this time, she completed her studies to earn a Masters Degree in Administration and Supervision from Seton Hall University. She later served as Assistant Superintendent of Archdiocese Schools in Hudson County.

In 1977, Sister Maureen was delighted to return to Immaculate Conception School, her alma mater, to teach high school history and serve as Vice Principal. A memory from that time reveals Sister Maureen’s passion for education. “I can still remember this one instance. We were having this debate and all the football players decided they were going to take this particular stand. I kept pushing, pushing the kids for primary sources. And I can still picture this one fellow waving this book frantically at the other group of kids saying ‘So and so said, and here it is, right in this book!’ The bell rang, and they went off to lunch, but when they went down the back stairs they were still arguing the point. I said to myself, ‘That’s it! That’s what you want. That’s the kind of excitement and interest that you want from kids!’”

Sister Maureen went from teacher and Vice Principal at Immaculate Conception to become teacher and Vice Principal at Marylawn of the Oranges School. In 1984, she returned to Immaculate Conception to serve as school Principal and later President.

As a teacher and administrator, Sister Maureen was highly respected by both students and staff. She laughs when recalling that when people came to her to sort out a problem or settle a question, “I’d tell people, ‘You simply go back and say that **Sister said** ... and that will be the end of it!’” Everyone knew that invoking the name of “Sister” would get things done!



Sister Maureen worked diligently to fulfill parents' expectations that the school would provide a safe and caring environment that reflected and instilled Christian values. She also insisted upon high academic standards, working to bring out the very best in her students. She says, "I always held my students to high standards, and they came through." She is immensely proud of the 100% high school graduation rate at Immaculate Conception and the fact that virtually 100% of the students go on to college. Especially in recent years, she has been gratified to learn that so many of her students have gone on to earn Masters degrees.

Sister Maureen's high standards and expectations always went hand in hand with her compassion and love for her students. The students could count on her to be present and to be a friend and an advocate when they needed one. Over the years, Sister Maureen helped numerous students work through very serious personal problems, and her guidance surely affected the future course of several students' entire lives.

In 2013, Sister Maureen retired as President of Immaculate Conception. She continues to act as a consultant while also serving as Immaculate's President Emerita and a member of the Board of Trustees. She also serves on the Boards of both the College of Saint Elizabeth and the Academy of Saint Elizabeth. She reflects, "I'm very grateful that I still have my hand in education. It's always been my life's work."

Sister Maureen considers her vocation as Sister of Charity and educator to be a gift from God. She is humbled to be part of the continuing legacy of Sisters of Charity who devote their lives to the ministry of education. She says, "To me, education in the Vincentian, Setonian tradition is what it means to be a Sister of Charity. I don't want to in any way diminish all the other ministries of the Sisters of Charity, but I've always been very proud of the educational component of the Sisters of Charity and the marvelous things that we've done in the field of education for over 150 years. I only hope that in my many years in education, I have been worthy to be associated with all of that."

Thanks to Sister Maureen's example and her unselfish dedication to her vocation, innumerable students have gone on to pursue vocations of their own. For these students, the term "educator" will forever evoke memories of Sister Maureen Crowley, the teacher and principal who brought light to their eyes and kindled a flame in their hearts.