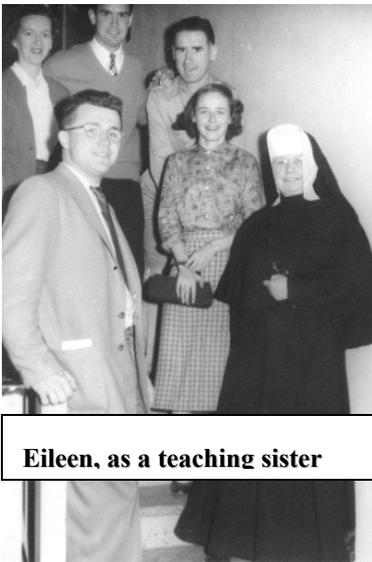


Eileen Donnelly

Led by the Shepherd

My name is Eileen Donnelly. On July 5, 1911, I was born in a small village just outside of Montreal. Along with two brothers and two sisters, I was brought up in a staunchly Catholic home. In school, I learned the fundamental teachings of the Church given by Catholic nuns. In July, 1928, at the age of seventeen, I decided to join my teachers and became a teaching sister myself. I spent the next fifty-five years in a convent where I was totally absorbed in my work and I loved it. Teaching assignments were in Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Windsor, Ontario; Silver Spring, Maryland, and Montreal, Quebec. I was happy and my life flowed on like a river. Oh, there were ups and downs, but it never entered my mind to waver or to look back.



Eileen, as a teaching sister

Being Led into a New Way

It was not until around 1972 that I came into regular contact with “born again” believers through the Charismatic Movement. I had never owned a Bible or heard of being “born again” or of the “gifts of the Spirit”. I had much to learn. Reluctantly, I began going to prayer meetings, urged on by a companion at work. At this time after thirty-eight years of teaching, I was engaged in social work.

What attracted me most and fed my heart and soul for weeks was an understanding of the Lord’s desire that we come to know and love Him more intimately. This struck a responsive chord in me and kept me going to the meetings where I met believers who were using the gifts God had given them. Through them I was led to join a small prayer group where little by little I was learning the Lord’s Way.

Resisting the Lead

Looking back over these years, I can laugh at myself as I recognize the gentle nudging the Shepherd used to draw me to Himself and His flock. Had the leader of this small prayer group not been the man he was, I would have dropped out because the years that followed were the most crucifying ones I have ever lived.

A Catholic sister in the group shared with me that the Lord showed her that my theology was wrong. No details were given and I felt stranded and alone, like a lost sheep, unable to help myself. I wanted to know in what areas I was wrong, but for the moment there were no answers. The Lord has His own way of guiding and it was only by degrees, step by step, that He led me to His truth. I know that if it had not been done His way, the shock might have shattered my faith completely.

The first breakdown was the Mass where I found my soul's nourishment because I firmly believed that Christ was physically present in the Eucharist. From the age of sixteen, I had never voluntarily missed daily communion. My entire religious life was centered around the Eucharist. When the road became too rough for me, I went to my tabernacled Christ for support and guidance and despite my ignorance regarding real presence there, I know without a shadow of a doubt that He overlooked my ignorance and supplied my need. Many times I had tangible answers to prayer.

One day, as I prayed, I began to question in this manner, "I have been receiving Christ in communion daily for years now, then why am I not a saint today? Why is He not more real to me? Why do I have to look to friends for the love and support I need to carry on in this religious life?" I was thus running risks that could have meant my ruin had not the Lord's protective love shielded me. "Why do I not know the Lord experientially if He is really and truly present in the Eucharist that I receive daily?" I felt cheated, let down, as though something powerfully needed was missing in my life. Was I guilty in some unknown way? What caused this strong feeling of emptiness, so acute that something was not answering my need?

Today I know that my Shepherd was slowly, patiently leading me to the discovery that He is not physically present in the Eucharist as I had been taught so deceptively. In His perfect timing, I could accept it more easily. Through the leader of the prayer group, himself a former Catholic who had gone through the darkness and come into the light, the Lord taught me where my belief was wrong. In true Irish fashion, I rebelled at the very thought that believing in the real presence in the Eucharist was wrong. Based on the words of the Bible, I argued, "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*" How could I be wrong? The leader always said, "Stick by the Book, lean on the Word." As Paul said, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:9). If it is not in the Book, do not accept it even if it is an angel who tells you. How could I accept this? It was in the Book. To say that I fought it is putting it mildly!

If Christ was not physically present in the Eucharist, then the bottom was falling out of my religious life. What was left? I was shattered, but the Lord gave me the strength to not walk away. I stayed and fought on, prayed, and studied until I accepted in obedience because the one who was teaching me was a sincere, obedient follower of the Lord. He had traveled this road before me and if he had survived and loved the Lord as he does, then why couldn't I? However, in no mistakable terms, I told the Lord, "You will have to teach me Yourself", and He did just that!

Drawn to the Shepherd

One error after the other was shown to me until I realized just how wrong my theology had been. The rest was easier to accept, for I can see it all so plainly now. I wondered how I could have been so blind. When all your life you have been taught that the Catholic Church is the only true Church and that all others are wrong, you do not go out on a witchhunt searching for error. It simply does not occur to you that you are being deceived.

The leader of our group said to me one day, "Eileen, why didn't you search for the truth?" Inside my feathers were ruffled and I told him, "Today, why don't you start hunting for a different

answer to two plus two? It doesn't enter your mind because you have taken for granted that the answer, four, is correct." In the past I never questioned the doctrine I had been taught. Not so today! I argue with priests and nuns as I never would have dared to do years ago. In the process I realize that unless the Lord removes the scales from their eyes, they simply cannot see the truth, for they are in total darkness. Jesus said, "*No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up on the last day*" (John 7:44).

Biblical Understanding

For some years I did not own a Bible so I was ignorant of the truth it contained. If at a prayer meeting someone asked me to read Psalm Twenty-three, I could have easily begun searching in Genesis. An example is devotion to Mary and the saints. In the community to which I belonged, December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated with pomp and splendor. For years I sang in convent choirs repeating again and again the words of the Magnificat, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Never once did it enter my mind to question the words "*in God my Savior*", yet the truth was there for everyone to see. Why had I never awakened to this discrepancy? How could Mary be conceived immaculate and still proclaim Christ to be her Savior? If she needed a Savior, then she was a sinner like all the rest of us, as good a woman as she must have been. Besides, Christ said He was like us in all things, except sin. Our mothers were not conceived immaculate, neither was His. Christ also refutes her immaculate conception when He said, "*Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist*" (Matthew 11:11). Mary was living at that time.

More and more of the false teachings came crashing down. What about the Lourdes' apparition that claimed to be the Immaculate Conception? Mary would not have lied! Then the one who did appear was the deceiver, the father of lies! Yet, Catholics have been obliged to believe this lie of 1854 because of the dogma proclaimed by our "infallible" popes. Paul's teaching in Galatians 1:8 speaks about such deception, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*" Now I could see clearly! The same holds true for the dogma of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, proclaimed by Pius the XII. Attempts of popes to proclaim "Mary, Mediatrix of all graces" completely contradicts the Word of God which teaches that Jesus is the only Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2: 5-6).

Next came the question of purgatory and all the Masses that are supposed to relieve and ransom souls from their sufferings. None of this is Biblical. One example from the Bible that exposes this false teaching is the thief on the cross to whom Christ said, "*This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*" A whole life of sin was washed away in a moment, as the thief recognized and believed in Jesus Christ and was given the promise of eternal life in Paradise that very day. Even Catholicism taught that the soul appears before Christ immediately after death and is judged. If saved, the soul is admitted to heaven and if lost it is condemned to hell. In view of this teaching, where is the logic in urging the faithful to have Masses said again and again for years? One that is saved does not need them and one that is lost cannot benefit by them since out of hell there is no redemption.

What about the Mass itself? It is condemned in Hebrews 10:14, "*for by one offering He hath perfected forever them are sanctified.*" The Bible also makes it clear that "*only God can forgive sin*". We are to confess our sins directly to Him. Jesus Christ is our High Priest and everyone who believes in Him shares in this royal priesthood. There is no need for indulgences, "*and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7). Jesus paid our sin debt in full. The list of teachings that are contrary to God's Word goes on and on.

Personal Direction

A personal direction from God's Word was given to me in Isaiah 48: 20, "*Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord redeemed his servant Jacob.*" Confirmation from others also made it clear that I was to leave the convent. It was December 18th, 1982. Within a week I had written a nine-page letter to the authorities of my community, detailing for them the errors I had discovered in the teachings of the Catholic Church, giving them Biblical references to back up my statements and telling them that the day had come when I could no longer continue living a life so blatantly contrary to the teachings of the Bible. Therefore, as of December 31st, 1982, I was no longer to be considered a member of their community and asked to be released from any legal obligation towards them. I could not continue where there was only ritualistic performance.

I was told that Rome would possibly not consider my given reasons sufficient to release me. But I assured them that, if necessary, I would take up my petition with Rome myself and I meant what I said. Rome officially granted my request on June 10th, 1983, but I belonged to the Lord long before when I accepted Him as my Savior. He became my Shepherd and my life belonged to Him. No longer would I follow the traditions of man.

Care for My Every Need

A member of Verdun Community Church, Quebec, called the social agency where I had been working for the past thirteen years inquiring about an association for patients suffering from Parkinson's disease. After giving the requested information, I mentioned to the caller that according to her statements she was rendering service above and beyond the call of duty and added that the Lord said, "*what you do for one of these, you do unto me.*" Immediately she said, "You are a born-again Christian, aren't you?" I admitted that I am and she insisted that we meet.

The following Sunday I went to the Verdun Community Church, met my telephone friend and have been attending Sunday Services there ever since. Again, the Lord was leading me, taking care of my every need.

On July 8th, 1984, I requested to be baptized after pondering over the baptism I had received in the Catholic Church when I was four days old. I now realized that this, too, was not according to God's Word. I was baptized by Pastor John Kristensen on July 10th, 1984.

My On-Going Mission

My on-going mission among other things is to go to the blind and the weak. Frequently I pray for those I left behind in the convent that they will be brought to the light of His truth. The Lord has and continues to fulfill in my life the message in a hymn that says, "Great is Thy faithfulness...Morning by morning new mercies I see, All I have needed, Thy hand has provided. Great is Thy faithfulness Lord unto me."

Since I left my working days, after almost fifty-five years of teaching and then back to college to qualify for social service for the next twenty years, at age eighty I am still not unemployed. Instead I am busy as a beaver in the Lord's work of getting out the Good News of redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is done by lengthy explanatory letters sent to those I learn of by the newscasts, newspapers, word of mouth, phone calls, etc. The Lord brings His work to me. Here are two examples. I saw in a local paper the picture of a "hooker" who worked for ten years in the West, now dying of AIDS. She was being cared for in a local home. The paper announced that she was looking forward to her marriage to a man in the same boat as herself. They both looked like death warmed over. I recognized the name of the place where she and her fiancé were staying. Thinking of how compassionately our beloved Lord brought Mary Magdalene to Himself, I prayed for direction to write to this dying woman. The newspaper said she was looking forward to her wedding day. The home had made her dress, ordered her cake, etc., and she was joyful once more, but she had very little time to live.

In my letter I referred to the anticipated joy she felt because of her wedding day and asked her if I could tell her of a greater joy by far, one that would never end. Then I launched out into a minute explanation of what it means to be born-again and the joy in heaven's celebration as a stray lamb is found by the Shepherd. Soon after the letter was sent, the same newspaper reported that she had called off the wedding and returned home to her mother. The letter may well have been used by the Lord for sharing with her former lover, her mother, and others.

A second example was a newspaper report of a woman with Lou Gehrig's disease. She also had little time left to live. Her comment was, "At least I'll have time to prepare for my death." No address was given but the Roman Catholic priest came to bring her communion so I called the parish church. When I asked for her address, explaining that I belonged to a prayer group and wanted to send her a card with wishes and prayers, I was told they never give addresses. So I asked that if the greeting was sent to the rectory, could the priest on his next visit give it to her? This was acceptable. In the well-sealed envelope was a detailed explanation of the system of works taught by the Catholic Church that gives no assurance for eternity until you are face to face in judgment. This was followed by the Good News which is so different. Your debt was paid in full by Jesus' death on Calvary when His blood washed away our all our sin. Assurance of salvation is available if we believe and accept the offered salvation.

The Harvest is Great

I have found ways to get the truth of salvation to members of government, sharing in terms they cannot rebuke except by suppressing the truth (Romans 1: 18). A visiting pastor from England requested that I write my testimony and he had it published in his country. Several churches have invited me to give my testimony and with my pastor's approbation, much detail has been shared with them. We can only faithfully present the truth of salvation when we have the opportunity and leave the results to the Lord. It is a privilege to work in the Lord's harvest.

A Life of Thanksgiving

I want my testimony to be one of praise and thanksgiving to my magnificent Shepherd for His mercy and love towards me. He led the whole way and all I had to do was obey and follow His leading. Among so many things I am most grateful for is the fact that when He called me, He gave me the strength and the will to obey immediately without looking back or questioning the future as to how I would manage alone in this world. Though I had cut myself off from all material security that I knew. Indeed "*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*" (Psalm 23: 1, 3)