DEAN M. LOUISE FITZPATRICK, A VISIONARY AND PIONEER, DEFINED WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A VILLANOVA NURSE

For nearly 40 years, M. Louise Fitzpatrick, EdD, RN, FAAN, faithfully fostered, shaped and nurtured her passion, the Villanova University College of Nursing, into a premiere, nationally recognized school. To create her legacy, the Connelly Endowed Dean and Professor did more than rely on evidence-based practice. As she related in the email that Father Donohue read at the funeral, Conners, the dean’s presence. “The knowledge, mentoring, understanding, compassion and love that she bestowed on every student and staff member—individually—eclipsed all else,” the father said in an email. “Remembering that God does not take life but gives life makes us understand that through Him, Dean Fitzpatrick gave life in the greatest sense to Villanova Nursing programs and all she touched.”

TRANSFORMING A COLLEGE

Intellect, integrity and compassion were hallmarks of Dean Fitzpatrick’s tenure, which began in 1978. She expanded the College’s academic programs, including new master’s and doctoral programs, and developed distance learning strategies and clinical simulation laboratory initiatives. During her deanship, the College received an NLN Award for Outstanding Leadership from the National League for Nursing in 2004, and it was the 2016 Leader of Leaders Award from the NLN. In 2015, the University Administration, summed up these successes at Commencement in 2015, when the University bestowed on Dean Fitzpatrick an honorary doctorate. “She invests much personal and professional time in developing partnerships, programs and initiatives that educate all students in a forward-thinking way,” O’Driscoll extolled, “while meeting the future needs of this country, including endowments related to graduate education, cultural diversity and global perspective.”

Before becoming Villanova’s third dean of Nursing, Dean Fitzpatrick taught at Columbia University, where she had earned two master’s degrees and a doctorate, and began building her reputation as a trailblazer in nursing education. She advised graduate students in curriculum development and community health nursing.

CELEBRATING AN EXTRAORDINARY EXAMPLE

Five days later, faculty, staff, alumni, colleagues, relatives, friends and students filled St. Thomas of Villanova Church for the Mass of Christian Burial, while countless more watched via live stream from around the world. In his homily, Assistant to the President Rev. Karl Ellis, OSA, PhD, ’59 MA, dean emeritus of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, described his longtime colleague as both a “consummate academic” to whom everyone listened and a “sister in Augustine,” devoted to Villanova’s mission and to the province, and affiliated with the Order of St. Augustine.

Near the end of the liturgy, Madeline Bell ’83 CON, president and CEO of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and a member of the College’s Board of Directors, reflected on the influence that Dean Fitzpatrick, who continually raised the bar for herself, had set for her “disciples.” Bell expressed the sentiments of fellow Villanova nurses when she recalled how the dean would “teach with pride at the achievements of students and alumni.” Stephanie Conners, MRA, RN, NEA-BC, ’93 CON had seen that look of pride on her mentor’s face when she ran into the dean at a conference at which Conners was presenting. As she related in the email that Father Donohue read at the funeral, Conners, the senior executive vice president, hospital chief operating officer and chief nursing officer at Cooper University Health Care, attributes her success to the support that Dean Fitzpatrick showed her as an undergraduate.

“That’s what we remember most about Louise,” Father Donohue added at the end. “She embodied everything Villanova constantly speaks about. She looked after the individual.”

Parents, too, appreciated Dean Fitzpatrick’s personal attention to their children. When they heard that she had died, Robert Buese ’66 COE and his daughter Whitney ’97 CON reminisced about what a blessing it had been to be in the dean’s presence. “The knowledge, mentoring, understanding, compassion and love that she bestowed on every student and staff member—individually—eclipsed all else,” the father said in an email. “Remembering that God does not take life but gives life makes us understand that through Him, Dean Fitzpatrick gave life in the greatest sense to Villanova Nursing programs and all she touched.”

DEAN M. LOUISE FITZPATRICK valued above all her relationships with others, including students, Augustinians and College of Nursing alumni. From left: With Teresa Holman ’07 MSN at the College’s Convocation; with the Rev. John M. Driscoll, OSA, PhD, ’48 CLAS, the former Villanova president for whom the College’s building is named, at Driscoll-Hall’s dedication in 2006; and with Nursing alumni who had participated in a partnership between the College of Nursing and the Ministry of Health in Oman to educate Omani nurses for academic and administrative leadership roles in their country.