BENEDICTINE SISTERS SACRED HEART MONASTERY in CULLMAN, ALABAMA

916 Convent Road NE, Cullman, AL 35055 ~ *www.shmon.org* ~ (256)734-4622

January 21, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE_____

CULLMAN—Sister Eleanor Harrison, O.S.B., a Benedictine Sister of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, AL, died peacefully at the monastery on January 21, 2024, at the age of 97. Sister Elisabeth Meadows, Prioress, led prayers as Sisters gathered at her bedside.

Reception of the Body with Vespers of the Dead will be at 4:45 PM on Thursday, January 25, followed by Visitation until 7:00 PM. The Mass of Christian Burial will be at 10:30 AM on Friday, January 26, with burial in the monastery cemetery to follow. All liturgies and Visitation will be held in Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel, 916 Convent Rd., Cullman.

Born in 1926 in Birmingham, Alabama, Sister Eleanor was baptized Gertrude Cora Harrison at St. Augustine Catholic Church in North Birmingham. Her parents, Isaac Fletcher and Margaret Harrison, nurtured her within a devout Catholic family. Gertrude attended St. Paul's Elementary and Secondary School in Birmingham where she excelled under the tutelage of Benedictine Sisters. She earned an A.B degree in Mathematics from Mount St. Scholastica College in Atchison, KS, and later a Master's degree in Secondary Education from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

After earning her A.B. in 1949, Gertrude joined the faculty of Sacred Heart Academy in Cullman. After several years of teaching at Sacred Heart, she entered the Benedictine community in 1958 and received the religious name "Mary Eleanor" upon her entrance into the novitiate. Sister Eleanor made her temporary monastic profession in 1959 and perpetual profession in 1962.

John Carroll Catholic High School was Sister Eleanor's first ministry assignment. Her mathematics credentials did not limit her solely to the math classroom, however. Her administrative gifts were noticed and she was named assistant principal. Other talents surfaced, too, and she was soon moderating the drama club and organizing theater productions.

After eight years at John Carroll, Sister Eleanor returned to Cullman to serve on the faculty and as an administrator of Sacred Heart College. As academic dean, Sister Eleanor improved programs and was integral to the college's move to co-education and the name change to Cullman College. When the two Benedictine colleges in Cullman merged, Sister Eleanor was a key leader in the creation of the new Southern Benedictine College.

In 1979, Sister Eleanor accepted the opportunity to teach at St. Jude High School in Montgomery where she taught mathematics, served as assistant principal, set up computer labs, and sponsored both the student council and the National Honor Society. She dearly loved the eight years she was at St. Jude, always remembering the people there with great affection.

Returning to Cullman in 1987, Sister Eleanor spent several years on the faculty of St. Bernard Preparatory School until she was asked to serve as Director of the Benedictine Spirituality and Conference Center in 1992. Under Sister Eleanor's leadership, the Center grew in the numbers of people served and the types of programs offered. She modeled Benedictine hospitality for countless guests.

In addition to being an accomplished educator and administrator, Sister Eleanor served in many roles within the monastic community, including serving on the monastic council. She was often called on for committee work, including, the Visitation/Self-Study Committee, the Peace and Justice Committee, and the Ministry Committee. She filled these roles as she did all her positions – with tireless dedication, a high standard of excellence, a keen eye for the nuances of any situation, and a passion for justice and those in need. This passion found an outlet in service within the civic community. She served on the Board of Directors of the Red Cross chapter in Cullman and on the Board of Ideal Industries, which aided disabled adults in Cullman. She was honored by the local Chamber of Commerce as the 1993 Retired Teacher of the Year.

Sister Eleanor found great joy in keeping up with graduates of Sacred Heart/Cullman College and she was known for her wide-ranging correspondence with friends far and near. Her thoughtful advice and warm encouragement were treasured by many. Even into her final weeks, Sister Eleanor, a wise elder, could be counted on to offer prudent counsel and ask thought-provoking questions.

Sister Eleanor dearly loved her family, with whom she remained close. In her later years, visits with nephews, nieces, and their families were treasured times of special joy.

Sister Eleanor was preceded in death by her parents and by her siblings: Mary Angela Harrison, Thomas Jay Harrison, William Francis Xavier Harrison, Margaret Harrison, Sister Praxedes (Jane Frances) Harrison, OSB, Fr. Timothy (Isaac Fletcher, Jr.) Harrison, OSB, and Joseph Edward Harrison.

Survivors include her Benedictine Sisters; beloved nephews, nieces and extended family, and a host of friends from all walks of life.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, AL, 916 Convent Rd., NE, Cullman, AL, 35055 or at shmon.org/support-us.