

Mother Loyola (Sister Ellen Mary Cullen) (1898–1994)

Ellen Mary was born May 3, 1898 in Hope River, Prince Edward Island. After receiving her early education in the district school of Hope River, junior high school training under the Notre Dame Sisters in Rustico, a first class teacher's license from Prince of Wales College and, some years later, the degree of Bachelor of Science in Home Economics from Saint Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Ellen Mary continued her personal interest in numerous paths of learning.

She entered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha of Prince Edward Island founded by Bishop Henry O'Leary in 1916, and in 1921 was elected Congregation leader by Bishop O'Leary who had the vision of establishing an Island Community of women to help meet the educational, social and spiritual needs of the diocese.

As Congregation Leader for two separate terms, a total of 24 years, she never lost sight of the founder's vision of exploring new educational possibilities and extending her skills to the betterment of society at large. To insure the art of proper learning and teaching in the field of health, she was the co-founder of the PEI Home Economics Association, an honorary member of the Dietetic Association as well as an honorary member of the PEI Association of Nurses. She initiated that Sisters earn degrees and certificates in various areas of health care or receive professional training in home economics, cooking, music and art and study Scripture and Theology as well. Her vision always remained broad and inclusive: when it was noted that education in the rural areas of PEI needed help she accepted the request to have Sisters work for this purpose. Alongside the opening of seven rural schools, her vision broadened to include the teaching in off Island schools, in Ontario and British Columbia, and when hospital personnel was requested, sisters were missioned in Van Buren, Maine, and Peru.

Sister Ellen Mary Cullen is fondly remembered as a woman of great wisdom, of courage in breaking new paths and supporting cultural changes. She had the foresight to realize that Sisters must be equipped in order to minister well in their area of service. Sister Ellen Mary Cullen (Mother Loyola) died peacefully at Mount St. Mary's, Charlottetown, on September 29, 1994.

