



Elizabeth Whelan Kelly

March 5, 1939 - March 3, 2026

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Elizabeth Kelly (nee Whelan) passed away peacefully on March 3, 2026 at the home of her eldest daughter, in a house filled with love, kindness and prayer, at the age of 86 after a prolonged illness.

Born and raised in the Bronx, NY, she was the beloved and only child of the late James and Elizabeth (nee Hannigan) Whelan.

Elizabeth was predeceased by her “Prince”, as she called him, John Barry Kelly after 36 years of marriage. She is loved and survived by her daughter Elizabeth (Kelly) Moran and her husband Scott, of Morganville, NJ, and Erin (Kelly) Webber and her husband Dean of Madison, NJ and her son Kieran F.X. Kelly and his wife Kara of Morristown, NJ. She was devoted to and cherished by her eight grandchildren Scott Jr., Brendan, Veronica, Catherine, Hannah, Courtney, Meghan and Dean Jr., each of whom brought immeasurable joy to her life.

Family tradition was deeply important to Elizabeth. For generations, the first daughter in the family was named Elizabeth, and she proudly carried that

tradition forward by naming her eldest daughter Elizabeth. She delighted in seeing the legacy continue through her granddaughters Catherine and Courtney who carry Elizabeth as their middle name, a living tribute to generations of strong women before them.

Elizabeth was a graduate of Sacred Heart of Mary Academy (Marmion) in the Bronx, NY in 1956. She attended Marymount College, Tarrytown-on-Hudson, NY on a full scholarship. Upon graduating in 1960, she began her lifelong career as a New York City public school teacher in Spanish Harlem where she taught for three years before marrying her Prince in 1963 and making her home on Staten Island where she continued to teach at P.S. 23 and P.S. 69, primarily kindergarten and first grade. She later earned her master's degree in early childhood education from CUNY.

Teaching was not just her profession, it was her calling. She volunteered to organize and direct the annual school Christmas play, drawing on her acting skills from her college years, which brought her immense joy. She was unable to go grocery shopping on Staten Island without being stopped at least once or twice by a parent or former student, and she was always more than happy to stop, chat and give advice. Growing up, we saw her as someone who knew everyone and could do anything.

In addition to her teaching career, her faith was the foundation of her life. She possessed a deep and steady devotion to God and was extraordinarily active in her Church. She volunteered numerous times at Church of the Holy Child on Staten Island where she founded and ran the pre-school program and served as volunteer administrator for three years. She also organized and ran various parish dances and events. When her children attended St. Charles School, she continued to volunteer, most memorably at the annual Christmas fair where she worked tirelessly to create handmade wreaths to be sold at the fair. For a whole month prior, there were pinecones, glue guns, and plaid bows

covering the dining room table. She was forever creating and forging ahead saying things like “It’s a great life if you don’t weaken”, “Bloom where you are planted”, “There but for the Grace of God go I” , “From your mouth to God’s ears” and “It is what it is”.

As much as she adored teaching, what truly made her happy was bringing people together. As an only child, she grew up craving the lively atmosphere of a full house, and she made sure she created that in her home. She loved planning parties, organizing holiday gatherings, hosting Christmas celebrations and Epiphany parties every year, and finding any excuse to set the table, decorate the house and fill the room with conversation and laughter. She took pride in making every event feel special and memorable. As a mother and grandmother, she stayed closely involved in the day-to-day moments such as picking up grandchildren from school, stepping in at the last minute, and showing up for all her loved ones at various Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, sports events, luncheons and hosting sleepovers for her grandchildren.

In addition to her family and faith, her other great passion was Irish culture and history which stemmed from her parents who were both born in Ireland. She became active in Irish organizations, serving as President of the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.) and later as Historian. She supported the Irish National Caucus and Mothers to End the War. She founded and ran St. Joseph by the Sea’s “Christmas in Killarney” dance which somehow managed to be a huge success in a not predominantly Irish school. Our house was filled with people cutting green shamrocks out of construction paper and being assigned various other chores in preparation for the dance, all this while balancing busy family schedules.

Life was rolling along until a boating accident caused a serious spinal injury at

the age of 50 that led to two operations and years of physical therapy. She faced this challenge with grit and faith, ultimately recovering and after a few years as an empty nester, she and Barry retired to Doylestown, PA.

In her own words, here is an excerpt from a piece she wrote for her 35th year college reunion: "Too soon the nest was empty. All three, independent! Now it's our time, my Prince and I! We sold our dream house and bought another..."Go West old Lady"! We chose Bucks County and if the house is ready, we'll be moving in after Kieran's wedding this summer. Did I say old? Nay! Dear friends, old is an attitude we do not possess. The years gone by have been our practice time and now we know the value of what we have. Let us proceed to wear purple and treasure our time together...as a class, as friends, as the women we have become..."

They remained in Doylestown until Barry's passing in 1999. Her devotion to family continued in the year 2000 when she opened her home to her mother, Elizabeth Whelan, and became her primary caregiver, ensuring she was surrounded by love and family and remained by her side until her passing as the remarkable age of 103. She then moved to Mountainside, NJ and fully enjoyed the chaos of grandchildren in and out of her home for years.

Upon moving to Mountainside, Elizabeth continued to devote her life to her faith serving on the Parish Council at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Mountainside, NJ. During her final year, as an illness progressed, Elizabeth moved in with her eldest daughter and her family and spent her final days surrounded by loving family and prayers.

Elizabeth wore her years with grace, humor, and unwavering faith. She leaves behind a legacy of tradition, celebration, devotion, and love. It was a life filled with blue skies (she refused to see grey), busy tables, organized events and open arms.

Visitation will be held at John Vincent Scalia Funeral Home, 28 Eltingville Blvd., Staten Island, NY on Friday, March 6 from 3-7.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Saturday, March 7, 2026 at 10:00 AM at Church of the Holy Child, 4747 Amboy Road, Staten Island, NY. Burial will follow at Moravian Cemetery at 12:00 PM.

Cemetery Details

Moravian Cemetery

2205 Richmond Road
Staten Island, NY 10306

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 6. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

John Vincent Scalia Home for Funerals, Inc.
28 Eltingville Blvd
Staten Island, NY 10312

Service

MAR 7. 10:00 AM (ET)

Holy Child Church
4747 Amboy Road
Staten Island, NY 10312

Tribute Wall

TZ

“ Tracy Z. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.

Tracy Z. - March 17 at 05:01 PM

SM

“ Our deepest sympathies to Elizabeth, Erin, Kieran & all their families on the sad passing of their dear Mum Betty (Elizabeth). We will cherish the memories of her visits to Bohadoon (outside Dungarvan in Co. Waterford) with her lovely Mum to see my parents Paddy & Bridget Whelan & all our family. She was such a generous, thoughtful, happy and chatty person who loved her family deeply. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all, Nora (Whelan) Flynn & family.

Susan McCarthy - March 09 at 04:36 PM

FK

“ Elizabeth was a truly great example of a smart, caring wonderful person. I came to know and work with her over the years at OLL in Mountainside. Truly one of the best of our "own."

Frank Kelly

Frank Kelly - March 08 at 02:05 PM

DH

“ Debbie and Chris Holmes planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.

Debbie and Chris Holmes - March 06 at 12:12 PM

DH

“ *Debbie and Chris Holmes purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.*



Debbie and Chris Holmes - March 06 at 12:12 PM

PB

“ *Dear Family
I am sorry for the loss of your beautiful Mom. She left many marks in this world. I miss our conversations and lessons on Ireland. It was Liz who sparked my interest in our ancestors.
I wish you peace and love.*

Pat Brennan - March 06 at 10:30 AM

LH

“ *Love, Claire & Nancy Hernon planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.*

Love, Claire & Nancy Hernon - March 06 at 09:14 AM

LH

“ *Love, Claire & Nancy Hernon purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.*



Love, Claire & Nancy Hernon - March 06 at 09:14 AM

LT

“ Love, Terry, Maggie, Charlotte, & Tyler purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.



Love, Terry, Maggie, Charlotte, & Tyler - March 05 at 09:17 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.



March 05 at 11:10 AM

JL

“ My deepest sympathies to the entire Kelly family on their loss.

John Larkin - March 05 at 08:59 AM

BC

*I was so lucky to meet Liz Kelly at OLL. She was a remarkable woman and will be missed
My deepest sympathy to her family. God bless her soul
Bridget Colendenski*

Bridget Colendenski - March 08 at 04:02 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.



March 05 at 08:34 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.

March 05 at 08:34 AM



“ Dear Liz, Erin, Kieran and families, I am so very sorry for your loss.



Your mother lived a wonderful life and gave you all so many happy memories growing up. When I visited your home, I could feel the love, the faith, the songs and the merriment that ONLY an Irish household could hold.

Your mother earned her rest and is now reunited with her beloved Prince!!! I picture your dad greeting her to the song, "If your Irish, come into the Parlour, there's a welcome there for you!" May they both be reunited in their faith and love for each other. God bless.
Theresa and family

Theresa - March 04 at 07:10 PM



“ Anne M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.

Anne M. - March 04 at 04:08 PM



“ My deepest sympathies to Erin and her family during this difficult time. Sending you strength and love, Renilde.

Renilde Zug - March 04 at 01:59 PM

RZ

“ *Renilde Z. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Elizabeth Whelan Kelly.*

Renilde Z. - March 04 at 01:53 PM