

Eileen Marie Kusser was born October 20, 1932 at home in Como Township, Hand County, South Dakota to Joe and Mary Alice (Heenan) Beranek. It was the height of the great depression and Eileen was so small she fit in a shoe box. Thus, began her life of resilience and strength. She died February 8, 2021 in the loving arms of her family at Avera Hand County Memorial Hospital, Miller, South Dakota at the age of 88 years, 3 months, and 19 days.

Eileen was raised on the farm with her brothers Marvin and Leo. She attended grade school at the Lott Country School just down the road. She loved helping her Mom and Grandmas cook and clean. She especially enjoyed caring for her baby brother. At the age of 14, her Dad took her to Wolsey to board the train to attend high school at Mount Marty High School in Yankton, SD. At that time, many Catholic girls from the area attended high school at Mount Marty. Eileen didn't care for boarding school as it involved being away from home for long periods of time. She graduated high school in 1950 and returned home and worked at First National Bank of Miller.

During one of the worst winters in South Dakota history, Eileen was united in marriage to her one true love Simon Kusser, who was her brother Marvin's best friend, at the Immaculate Conception Church, Stephan, South Dakota, on January 2, 1952. To this union five daughters and three sons were born.

After returning from a month-long honeymoon to the West Coast, they started their married life on K Lazy K Ranch. Eileen went about the business of raising her family and building a life on the ranch. A mother, not just to her kids but nieces, nephews, friends, and neighbors she treated each like they were one of her own. She took care of her daily chores cooking, cleaning, laundry, washing windows, gardening, canning, painting, sewing, mowing and most of all childcare with love and grace. She was a hard worker from sunrise to sundown with many tasks that needed attention. Eileen was very active in her kid's lives whether it was homework, helping with a 4-H project, a school activity or sports, she was always there guiding and providing encouragement. A big fan of the Highmore Pirates, she loved attending her grandkid's basketball games. Her grandchildren were a source of great pride and joy. She loved caring for them as children and watching them grow and find their own way in the world. Through times of change in their lives there was comfort in knowing that things would always be the same at Grandma's.

Eileen was the ultimate farm wife. She cooked thousands of meals for family gatherings, holidays, silage cutters, cattle workers, hunters and people coming to the ranch to work. Everyone loved her cooking and were grateful to be invited to her table for a good meal and conversation. All were welcome and most hoped she was serving her delicious roast beef and mashed potatoes. She also took care of the ranch bookwork and was always concerned about the farm and finances.

Eileen was a lifelong member of the Immaculate Conception Church at Stephan. She spent numerous hours cooking for and working at bazaars, serving church weddings and funeral dinners, teaching catechism, cleaning the church and being an active part in the Altar Society, serving as the Treasurer for more than 35 years. Her faith was a huge part of her life, as it sustained her through many tragedies and hardships. She was also a member of the Jaycees, bowled for several years with neighbors and friends, and served numerous times on county election boards. In the late eighties, Eileen took her first job outside the home in almost 40 years. She went to work part-time as a waitress at the Thunderbird Lanes in Highmore. She worked every Thursday for almost 20 years and gained special friendships along the way.

Eileen was always concerned about a neat house and tidy place. Though she was well known for her cooking, she always preferred to clean or work in the yard and garden. Eileen and Jimmy planted the grass on the west side of the house and thus started her improvements of the yard and love of keeping a beautiful lawn. Her manicured lawn showcased beautiful flowers and trees and Eileen spent countless hours planting, watering, and weeding the garden and lawn. She never met a weed she liked and wanted the place to look pristine. She took great pride in her home and was heartbroken on June 18, 2014 when a tornado destroyed just about everything she had worked for her entire life. She hated the mass destruction of her house, yard, and ranch. Yet, like every heartbreak in her life she steeled herself, put her head down and moved forward. Thus, proving a tiny woman could be the toughest of the family.

Eileen lived her life in ever changing times, a child of the depression she knew what it meant to take care of what you had and never waste. She made a promise to Simon in the spring of their lives and honored that promise and those vows through joys and unspeakable sorrow, through the loss of children, drought, blizzards, cancer, and even a tornado. Her commitment to him, her children, and grandchildren was rock steady. She gave that same commitment to her parents, brothers, beloved sisters-in-law, her entire extended family, and her friends whose phone calls and visits she enjoyed. Throughout all the seasons of her life, she led with a quiet strength and enduring faith. She was our center, our home, our rock, and she will be forever loved and forever missed.

Grateful for having shared her life are her children Sheila Kusser of Highmore; Jan Talley of Pierre; John Kusser of Highmore; Trish Wendte and husband Jim of Pierre; Marilyn Ring and husband Mike of Highmore; and Dan Kusser of

Highmore; grandchildren: Crystal Bonnichsen and husband Richard Oeckler, Zumbro Falls, MN; Wendy Bonnichsen, Eden Prairie, MN; Sarah Klumper and husband Lucas, Lakeville, MN; Justin Bonnichsen and wife Morgan, Highmore; and Max Ring, Highmore; great grandchildren: Susie, Kara and Harper Klumper, and Briar, Havyn, Rhett, and Collyns Bonnichsen; son-in-law, Steve Bonnichsen; friends who are family: Mike and Clela Henson, Huron; sisters-in-law and brother-in-law: LaVonne Kusser, Betty and Ronnie Heckenlaible, Highmore; Carolyn Beranek and Mary Beranek, Miller; cousin: Kenny and Sandy Werdel; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Waiting to greet her in heaven are her husband, Simon; her children; son Jimmy, who died in 1978, daughter, Susie Bonnichsen, who died in 2001; and son-in-law, Rolis Talley, who died in 2000; her parents; her brothers: Marvin and Leo; father and mother-in-law, Max and Mabel Kusser; brothers-in-law, Joe and Buzz Kusser; sister-in-law, Vonnie Kusser; niece, Debbie Kusser; and nephews: Ronnie Allen Heckenlaible and Chad Kusser.

Eileen has left this earth, but she will never leave our hearts or her beloved ranch home. Her quiet example of faith, grace, hard work, strength, kindness, and most of all love will be carried on through generations to come.



# Eileen Marie Kusser

October 20, 1932 - February 8, 2021

## Wake Service

5:30 p.m., Thursday, February 18, 2021  
St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Highmore, South Dakota

## Funeral Mass

11:00 a.m., Friday, February 19, 2021  
St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Highmore, South Dakota

## Celebrant

Father Christianus Hendrik

## Interment

Kusser Cemetery  
rural Highmore, South Dakota

## Lunch

Following burial at K Lazy K Ranch Shop

## Pallbearers

Justin Bonnichsen - Max Ring - Joey Kusser  
Jerry Kusser - Matt Kusser - Dave Kusser  
Dave Beranek - Mark Beranek - Steve Beranek  
John Beranek - Tom Beranek - Tim Beranek  
James Beranek - Joe Beranek - Tim Kusser  
Mike Kusser - Steve Heckenlaible - Gary Heckenlaible

## Honorary Pallbearers

Marguerite Oligmueller - Janet Pekarek  
Frankie Rinehart - Laurie Sheffield - Bev Gallagher  
Bernice Ellsworth - Lois Hart - Lex Werdel  
Lynn Werdel - Patti Werdel - Jill Cowan  
Joey Pekarek - LeAnn Suhn - Mary Hendricks  
Karen Kusser - Ricki Bloomenrader - Cindy Canode  
Dawn Rinehart - Lynn Pekarek - John Kutz  
Greg Welch - Scott Welch - Doug Welch  
Dan Welch - Denny DeGroot - Jim Corbet  
Calvin Flink - Hank Deering

## Ushers

John Hoffman - Ken Hoffman - John Werdel  
Ray Werdel - Rod Kusser - Bret Bloomenrader

**Lectors:** Joe Beranek - Dave Beranek

**Eucharistic Minister:** Mary Beranek

## Flowers

Barb Rounds - Angela Brandt - Peggy Kusser  
Shirley Dittman - Sharon Rau - Nancy Humphrey  
Brenda Gropper - Diane Moody - Pam Hannum  
Cindy Meinen - Mary Lee Klebsch - Coleen Kusser  
Suzy Oligmueller - Becky Lyle - Katina Lipsett  
Lisa Werdel

## Music

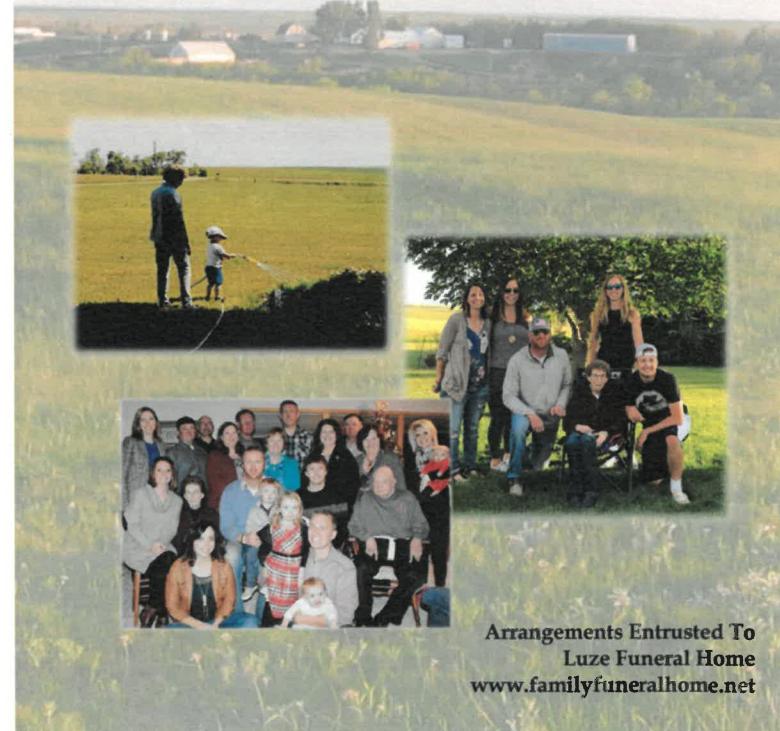
Opening: In the Garden  
Response: On Eagles Wings  
Offertory: Rock of Your Love  
Communion: You Raise Me Up  
Communion Meditation: Alleluia  
Closing: Be Not Afraid

Pianist: Chantrel LaMont

**Soloists:** John Beranek - Darcy Pugh - Lana Kopplin  
Kim Jensen - Shaly Werdel

## Scripture

First Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18  
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13  
Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12



Arrangements Entrusted To  
Luze Funeral Home  
[www.familyfuneralhome.net](http://www.familyfuneralhome.net)

# Celebrating A LIFE



*Eileen Marie Kusser*

1932 - 2021