

Remembering



Sister Nancy Munro, CSJ
July 29, 1943 ~ May 17, 2017

Almost 75 years ago a delightful baby was born to Gertrude and Robert Munro, their second child after having lost their first-born, Judy, at the age of 3. They named this child Nancy. Both parents had come from the Midwest: her father from Council Bluffs, Iowa, and her mother, Gertrude Stone, from Marion, Illinois. Their family grew to add Kathy, now deceased, Elaine, and Robert, their only son. Born a twin, his little sister Joann, died before her first birthday from the flu. The Munro couple settled in California near St. Anselm's School where Nancy was exposed to the CSJ spirit by such icons as Sisters Maria Louisa Valenzuela, Dennis Anne Cremins, and Michael Flaherty, all who were able to identify and nurture Nancy's many innate gifts. Besides her intelligence, Nancy was always a curious, adventurous and creative child.

After graduation from St. Anselm's, Nancy entered St. Mary's Academy. There she proved herself to be a student of extraordinary health and balance. She earned a perfect attendance award for all four years!

At home, even as a small child, Nancy showed interest in experimenting with crayons, layering one color over another. When she got to the fifth grade she got a black and white Kodak camera, and with patient instruction from her Dad, learned how to develop the film. She even set up a darkroom in her attic bedroom, and devoured books on photography. Nancy attributed much of her creativity to her grandmother, who, though somewhat of an "iconoclast" was resilient and open to experimentation. Grandma's favorite saying was: "If life hands you a lemon, make lemonade." This unique woman conveyed by

words and behavior that there are immense possibilities in everything in life. Nancy absorbed this truth so completely it became the guiding force of her creative life. Perhaps it was Nancy's insights into the nature of creativity itself, clearly tied to spirituality, which led her to enter the CSJ Community following high school on Sept. 8, 1961. Nancy articulated her view of creativity as follows: "Creativity is part of who I am and is part of who we are as human beings. Our creativity, our unique contribution, is our potential to be one with the Creator, because each of us is creative in her or his own way. We are all artists and called to make our world a better place with the touch of Divine that we each possess. It is a powerful gift, and we each have it."

Nancy was one of the "fire Postulants" who moved shortly after entering from the ruins of the Postulate housed at Carondelet Center to Doheny Campus under the direction of Sister Veronica Maloney. Nancy was formed in a makeshift environment, thriving through this period because it required so much creativity and resilience. She emerged stronger in her spirituality, moved on to the Novitiate on August 6, 1962, and pronounced her first vows on August 6, 1964, followed by final vows on August 15, 1969.

Shortly after making vows, Nancy was missioned to teach at St. Eugene's School, Grade 4, and then St. Catherine of Siena, Grade 5, each for one year. Then she went to St. Brigid's for 5 years teaching Grade 3, and then spent one year at St. James in Torrance in the same grade.

Nancy spent 6 years at St. Joseph High School in Lakewood teaching Art and English, at last able to concentrate on her innate talents. Armed with a Master's degree in Art from Calif. State University, Nancy was well prepared and sent to teach at Mt. St. Mary's College where for three years she was responsible for Graphics, Art and Printing.

Then, meeting a decided need at St. Mary's Academy in Inglewood, Nancy was missioned to teach Art and to supervise the Year Book. She was selected by the Board of Directors, and approved by CSJ Leadership to serve as Principal beginning in September of 1986. For fourteen years Sister Nancy headed St. Mary's at a time of many transitions and struggles to keep the community's oldest sponsored institution a viable concern.

After 14 years of devoted service and leadership, Nancy delighted in a period of personal renewal which she used to take a watercolor class, and to perfect her gift for photography. Nancy used her skills to help fundraise for the CSJ Peruvian missions. Traveling there, she shot numerous pictures depicting the devoted work of CSJs in Peru. She considered her ascent to Machu Pichu while there as one of the most spiritual experiences in her life.

Being an adventurous person, Nancy volunteered several summers to teach in Mexico, which exposed her to extraordinary generosity and poverty of the families. In one of her own recollections she described teaching over 100 children in a small Church sacristy with only a

few small benches on which the children could sit. But in far worse condition was her companion, Sr. Ramona Valdivia, who taught her Religion classes in a lean-to connected to a hog pen. These immersion experiences taught Nancy that out of the barest minimum sometimes comes the greatest abundance. She loved Mexico and the Mexican people.

Returning from her renewal, Nancy ministered at Bishop Garcia Diego High School in Santa Barbara for one year as Dean of Students. Thereafter, from 2002 onward, Nancy was attached to St. Joseph's High School, Lakewood, as Director of Public Relations, or Development, while also serving on the Staff of The Tidings, the L.A. Diocese's newspaper. She wrote articles, took photos, and exposed the Catholic readership to the often unknown or unheralded creative work in the diocese.

Several years ago Nancy was diagnosed with a rare blood disease. Despite often feeling fatigued, she stalwartly continued in ministry to the best of her ability until her short time at Holy Family Community. Even in her fragility, her creative nature dreamed up ways in which she could still reach out to the marginated using her skills in Spanish, honed by serving as Principal of an English summer school in Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico.

Without a doubt, Nancy was a multi-gifted person, with lots of curiosity and love of travel, using her talents wherever she went. As one of many examples, she assisted Charlotte Attebery, former member, at La Romita School of Art in Terni, Umbria, Italy.. Nancy

Munro was above all a devoted, loyal and life-long friend to many. She lived the CSJ spirit by stretching herself to do and be all of which woman is capable. Now, next to the Creator of all, she is privileged to see, not dimly but clearly, Beauty itself. ♦

~ Written by Sister Annette Debs, CSJ

