

Remembering



Sister Mary Frances Rebel, CSJ

January 24, 1925 ~ February 27, 2017

Sister Mary Frances Rebel, formerly known as Sister Albert Mary, returned to her baptismal name in 1974. Her French mother, Marie Olga Demee and Dutch father, Albert J. Rebel came to the United States from Europe in 1922 to become American citizens. On January 24, 1925, they were surprised by the birth of identical twin daughters in Hollywood, California. Relatives in Europe suggested that the girls be named after their maternal grandmothers but Marie and Albert thought it would be more interesting to select names of popular movie stars of that time. This choice was fortunate for Frances and Norma, otherwise they would have been named Belmira and Herminal!

In 1927, the Rebel family traveled to Europe so Frances and Norma could be introduced to grandparents in Holland. Six months later, Albert's new job in export took the family into

foreign countries where they lived—Hawaii, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, England, Switzerland and Holland. When World War II broke out in Europe in the Fall of 1939, Frances' parents began to make plans to return to the United States and both Frances and Norma were baptized in the Anglican Church. Only months later, the family arrived in America and settled in Los Angeles.

Frances and Norma then attended St. Mary's Academy and before graduation in 1942, they were conditionally baptized Roman Catholic at St. John the Evangelist Church in Los Angeles. After graduation, Frances and Norma took pre-nursing summer classes at Mount St. Mary's College before going into nurse's training in Tucson, Arizona.

The following September, 1943, Frances entered the Sisters of St. Joseph against her parents' wishes. Frances and seven in

the group of sixteen were asked to arrive a week early so they could prepare to teach in the parochial schools. Frances was assigned to teach second grade at St. John Chrysostom School. In 1950, Sister Rebecca Doan enrolled Mary Frances in the first Baccalaureate Nursing Program at Mount St. Mary's College where she graduated in 1952 with a B.S. degree in Nursing. With her R.N., she was assigned to St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson. The next Fall, Mary Frances was sent to UCLA for her Master's Degree in Nursing. She then joined the Nursing Department at Mount St. Mary's College where she taught Medical and Surgical Nursing for seven years.

In August, 1960 Mary Frances was assigned to Daniel Freeman Hospital as the Administrator. In 1965 she was appointed to the Provincial Council. A year later, the Councilors—Mary Frances, St. Charles Benton, and Dorothy Mary Edwards started working full time planning and coordinating education and health care ministries throughout the Province. Mary Frances was responsible for working with the six Province hospitals and for developing a decentralized health program for all the professed Sisters.

Having served twenty years in hospital administration, Mary Frances worked at Daniel Freeman Hospital, Inglewood, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Pasco, St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica, St. Mary's Hospital, Mineapolis, and St. Joseph's Hospital, Tucson.

As a member of the American College of Health Care Executives for many years, Mary Frances was awarded Fellowship

in 1969. In January, 1981, The Association of Western Hospitals named Mary Frances as one of their three "Women of the Year." One year before being assigned to Tucson, Frances worked for the Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation of Hospitals surveying hospitals in Texas.

In September of 1981 after her mother's death, Mary Frances asked to move into a new ministry and received a grant to study Clinical Pastoral Education at Hazelton Foundation in Minnesota. After completing the program, she served as a spiritual counselor in the Family Recovery Program for four years at St. Joseph's Hospital in Orange, California. In 1988, she was recruited to Newberg, Oregon, to plan, staff and work at Hazelden Foundation's new addiction treatment center. At Mary Frances' retirement party in August, 2003, she was surprised by having the Meditation Building named after her.

Mary Frances moved to Carondelet Center in November of 2003 to plan for a knee surgery and volunteered as a spiritual counselor helping women in recovery in Santa Monica. Working with alcoholics and addicts was a deeply spiritual experience for her.

In January, 2011, Moved to Holy Family Community. Following knee surgeries, Mary worked part time for Holy Family as a driver, working in the Development Office and writing for DESIGNS. She enjoyed her retirement with more time to pray, read, write, draw, listen to classical music and visit with friends. When asked about her life in Holy Family Community, she shared, "I already knew many Sisters here who began religious

life with me in the forties. Now, in retirement, I am blessed to complete a full circle with them."

Mary Frances often spoke about her early years growing up and her gratitude to her parents for teaching Norma and her to try to be honest, caring and kind. In Community, Mary Frances made good friends, enjoyed sharing stories of her life, drawing cartoons for fun, and painting landscapes of Oregon. Her best friend in life was her twin, Norma, who died suddenly in Oregon on New Year's, 2006.

Certainly Mary Frances made her parents proud. She was indeed "honest, caring and kind." She was also a marvelous, incredible and elegant woman. Now, along with Norma, we are proud and grateful to claim Mary Frances as our older Sister and mentor. *

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ

