



Remembering

Loretta Anne Bellue, CSJ

February 11, 1920 – November 19, 2018

On the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11, 1920, Lorraine Marie was the first daughter born to Joseph and Honorine Bellue at the family home in Los Angeles, California, where two older brothers, Joseph and Lawrence, awaited her arrival. Three years later her sister, Madeleine, was born. Lorraine was twelve when the last child, Catherine, completed the family.

Lorraine's family was one of the early settlers of Los Angeles. Her paternal grandfather, a young man of 23, arrived from France in 1872. He grazed sheep in the area of North Broadway and Spring Streets until he purchased property from one of the members of the Furlong family, who was an uncle of Sister Judith Poxon, C.S.J. As was typical of the time, her grandfather built their home, a grocery store and a saloon. Later her father and uncle replaced the original homestead with a gas station and restaurant, the first brick buildings

in the area. This property was held by her family for over a hundred years. It was in this area of Los Angeles that Lorraine spent the first sixteen years of her life.

Her maternal grandfather, also had a herd of sheep which grazed near what became Slauson and Crenshaw, a portion of which the Sisters of St. Joseph purchased to build St. Mary's Academy. The last piece of property the family owned was sold to St. John the Evangelist Parish where the parish school is now located.

Although Lorraine was baptized at St. Patrick's Church, she did not attend the parish school until seventh grade where she first met the Sisters of St. Joseph and then again as her teachers at Bishop Conaty Catholic Girls' High School. After high school in 1939, she found employment as the housekeeper and baby sitter for the children of the actor, Anthony Quinn, who was the

son-in-law of Cecil B. DeMille. It was through the DeMille family that she soon got a job at Paramount Movie Studios as a seamstress in the wardrobe department. She often told stories of sewing and designing for some of Hollywood's famous actresses.

On September 2, 1942, Lorraine entered the Sisters of St. Joseph at St. Mary's Academy. Receiving the habit on March 19, 1943, she was given the name, Sister Loretta Anne. She pronounced first vows on August 15, 1945 and final vows on August 15, 1948.

Besides her sewing skills, Sister Loretta Anne was also an excellent cook. Her first two assignments were as the cook for the children at St. Joseph's Academy, Prescott, AZ and St. Joseph's Children's Home in Culdesac, Idaho. Her elementary teaching career began at St. Boniface School, Banning, CA and then St. Francis Solano School, Sonoma, CA. Later she completed her teaching assignments in parish schools in the Los Angeles Archdiocese.

Her early employment as a seamstress and housekeeper were not forgotten. She was assigned in 1957, to the House of Studies to assist the postulants with the sewing of their habits. Later as the number of residents grew at the House of Studies, she assumed the duties as Executive Housekeeper. At Our Lady of Grace Convent, Daniel Freeman Hospital from 1971-1980, she was the Sacristan and Driver. These years were followed by five years at Mount St. Mary's College as Driver and Bookstore assistant.

In 1985, she chose to spend a sabbatical year with the sisters at St. Bridget of Sweden Convent in Van Nuys, CA. The next year Carondelet Gifts was opened in Ventura, CA, to sell the crafts of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Here she helped as a clerk in the store. When some of the patrons found out

that Sister was a seamstress, they asked if she could do alterations. As soon as the women realized how talented she was, she was never without customers. She even embroidered two Irish dance costumes, which were worn by the girls in a picture in the VENTURA COUNTY STAR.

When the store closed in 1989, Sister Loretta relocated to the Doheny Campus as a Driver. In 1991 she joined St. Mary's Community at Carondelet Center, first as a seamstress and then as Sacristan of the main chapel. She became very involved with making crafts for the Boutique. Even after she left Carondelet Center to become the driver for the senior Sisters at St. Bridget of Sweden and St. Cyril's, it seemed that crafting became her ministry.

In 2009, when it became apparent that some of her health issues needed to be addressed, she became a member of the Holy Family Community at Carondelet Center. She actively continued her creative skills: sewing, knitting, crocheting, baking not only for Holy Family events, but also for others, one being the mending of clothes for the CALVET veterans.

he looked forward to the weekly crafting sessions for the Angel Boutique with some Associates and others.

SAs did we in community, these women also could tell stories of the lively conversations they had with Sister Loretta Anne.

She was always ready to share her very frank opinions.

In early November Loretta Anne was placed on Hospice as she showed signs of declining. Soon she was missing from her favorite chair in front of the fish tank, where the gliding of the exotic fish often lured her into a very sound afternoon nap. By Friday, November 16th, although in and out of consciousness, she looked up and

saw her niece at her bedside and called her by name. Her Boutique friends, Barbara, Sharon and Mary arrived in time to say goodbye. By Monday morning, November 19th her breathing slowed as if finishing the last stitches of the pattern God had created so many years ago.

Dear Loretta, the colorful threads of your life now blend in harmony, becoming a cloth of love you have lived during your ninety-eight years on this earth. Your hands are still now as you have heard the call, "Come good and faithful servant." It is time to enjoy what God has created for you. May you rest in peace. ❖

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ and Sister Barbara Dugan, CSJ

