



## Remembering

### Rose Leonard Stevling, CSJ

November 21, 1934—December 27, 2018

**E**lizabeth Anne Stevling, known as Betty, was born in Washington, D.C. Her father, Leonard Walter Stevling, was born in Viroqua, Wisconsin. He was one of the first men to join the CSJ Associates in Los Angeles, and was very faithful to attending meetings while his health permitted. Betty's mother, Rose Marie Barrett, was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Stevling family of four, mother, father, Betty and Joseph, moved from the East Coast to settle in Hawthorne, California in 1941. There, Betty attended St. Joseph Grammar School from 1941 to 1946. Then, her parents transferred their daughter to Villa Cabrini in Burbank from 1946 to 1948 where she received her eighth grade diploma. Betty first met the CSJs at St. Mary's Academy where she attended High School. Betty greatly enjoyed her years at the Academy, studying Latin and graduating in 1952. Betty became close friends with other Latin students. She was a diligent student, graduating in 1952 with her treasured diploma marked

with St. Mary's guiding motto: *Deus illuminatio mea*, i.e. God is my light. Though it is unclear just when Betty felt called to religious life, her teenage years were enriched by her studies and lasting friendships at St. Mary's, but also by gaining work experience. She worked part-time as a secretary at Herber's Lumber Co., Lawndale, at a Rasco Dime Store, and three years at the Betty Anne Dress Shop in Los Angeles, owned by her aunt and namesake. Perhaps it was working at this dress shop that helped her, so many years later when she changed from the habit, to be known as a snappy and tasteful dresser! Betty entered religious life at St. Mary's Academy on September 15, 1952 along with at least seven of her St. Mary's friends. She remained close with Sister Joan Marie Hagen, Sister Anna Marie Gillette, and Sister Barbara Joan Nicewander in particular.

**O**n March 18, 1953, Betty received the habit and her religious name, Sister Rose Leonard, in honor of her parents.

Sister pronounced her final vows at the new House of Studies chapel on August 15, 1960. In 2013 Rose Leonard celebrated her 60th Jubilee as a CSJ. Those who were in formation or missioned with Sister Rose Leonard recall that Betty had a wonderful sense of humor, and was a devoted community member. One sister remarked, "She was lovely to work and live with." Rose was a diligent and bright student. In 1963 she received her B.A. from Mount St. Mary's and then was awarded a M.A. in History in 1971. That same year she received her lifetime elementary credential. Sister Rose Leonard's first mission was to St. Eugene School in Inglewood. She had a beautiful singing voice, and was often given charge of the choir in addition to her teaching assignments. She excelled as a teacher and the children enjoyed having her as their teacher. Rose Leonard possessed the remarkable quality of infectious enthusiasm.

**F**or fifteen years she taught seventh graders in various schools. In an especially difficult school, where many of the fathers were fishermen or military personnel, and often gone for long periods of time, Sr. Rose Leonard was especially effective with the boys. What's more, she even enjoyed the challenge! In 1974 Rose Leonard began teaching high school. First she was missioned to Carondelet High School to teach Social Studies. Other high school assignments included St. Joseph High School, Lakewood, and St. Monica High School in Santa Monica. For five years, Sister was assigned to Mount St. Mary's Doheny Campus both to teach and serve as Coordinator of Advisement Testing. There after,

starting in 1993 and extending for a total of nine years, she returned to St. Monica High School as Faculty Advisor and Academic Councilor. It was here she received exceptional results and high praise from her principal. She was an enthusiastic and creative teacher, an experienced presenter and facilitator of workshops, and an innovative instructor with expertise in reading education, social sciences, and multi-cultural education. In June 2002, she received the Kenny Award from St. Monica Catholic High School Performance Arts.

**S**ister Rose Leonard was only the second non-performer to receive this honor. At the end-of-the year Rose Leonard was presented with both a plaque and gift from the administration. Sister had a special interest in the continuity of education from elementary school through high school in preparation for college. Her philosophy, in her own words was: "Students are just not prepared equally before entering college, that is why we have some bright students who end up needing help." Sr. Rose Leonard stressed the importance of support systems that college should offer to reduce the attrition rate. So, she designed a model plan for needed support at Doheny. Rose Leonard also implemented a campus-wide chemical dependency prevention/intervention program. Sister believed in life-long and collaborative learning so belonged to several professional associations, including: National Academic Advising Association, Western Reading and Learning Association, National, State and Regional Social Studies Councils, and World Affairs

Council-Northern Chapter, among many others. Another deeply held concern for Sr. Rose Leonard was social justice. She attended numerous workshops both locally and nationally and was not only well informed but gently passionate about current issues of injustice. This interest in social justice deepened during her years at St. Monica High School. For several summers Sister Rose Leonard and her Holy Name sister friend would go camping. This yearly trip was something she looked forward to all year.

**R**ose was very close to her father. The last years of his life were spent at the Little Sisters of the Poor residence in San Pedro. When he died, it was a very difficult time for her. Soon after, her dear friend, Sister Georgeann O'Brien, died in Peru. These two losses took a great toll on Rose. On January 1,

2005, as Sister's health failed, she came to Carondelet Center as a volunteer and member of Holy Family Community. On February 15, 2008 Sister became a resident of St. John of God Residence while also assisting with pastoral care as her energy allowed. Gradually Sister became mostly bedridden. She loved when any visitor would come and sing to her. Her death came swiftly.

Dear Rose, you tried to follow these words during your lifetime: "This alone the Lord required of you: to do justice, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God." ~ Micah 7:8 Now may your generous and gifted soul be with our loving God.

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ

