



## Remembering

Jeanne Cecile Cools, CSJ

December 22, 1934 - February 2, 2019

Cecilia Marie was born in Los Angeles, the fifth of seven children. Four brothers preceded her into the family, Charles, Robert, Donald, and Richard, next came Cecila and two sisters, Dorothy and Mary. While their father, Charles Florant Cools was from Detroit, their mother, Cecilia, was born in New Market, Minnesota. Altogether, her brothers and sisters had 34 children, so Cecilia was the proud aunt of many nieces and nephews. She was always caring and interested in her relatives. Sister Rose Agnes Haskins, C.S.J., who died in November 2018, was her cousin. Another cousin, Penny Walsh has been a faithful and close friend over the years.

Cecilia first attended El Segundo Elementary School, and next attended St. Cecilia Elementary, where she first met the Sisters of St. Joseph, and graduated from eighth grade in 1949. She enrolled at Catholic Girls High School and later transferred to Santa Clara High School in Oxnard,

and graduated in 1953.

Not long after her graduation, Cecilia entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 15, 1953. Reception followed on March 19, 1954, and she was given the religious name Sister Jeanne Cecile. She pronounced first vows on March 19, 1956. In 2014, Sister celebrated her 60th Jubilee as a woman religious.

After several years of attending Saturday classes to finish her studies, she received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Mount St. Mary's College in 1964, and received her Standard Elementary Credential in 1978.

Sister Jeanne Cecile taught middle grades for 26 years, often with classes of 50 students. She has been described as competent and reliable, feeling no job was too big for her. She was always interested in team sports and the outdoors. At Orinda, she loved yard duty on the boys' side of the yard, and enjoyed watching the deer on the hillsides. For a few years,

she was a Physical Education Instructor and coach. Sister also assisted in schools as a librarian. Eventually, around 1992, she became a free-lance computer programmer and created 28 different educational programs for elementary school children. The programs provided assistance in basic learning skills and challenged ambitious students. She founded and directed for five years a CSJ Computer Tutoring Center serving 23 schools, ranging from the very poor to the very wealthy.

From, 1976-1979 Sister was House Coordinator for Carondelet Center. She was organized, efficient and hard working.

Jeanne was handy with wood and electric projects as needs arose at the Center. Her willingness to do tasks was remarkable; she gave herself heart and soul to her work.

In 2001 at Carondelet Center, she worked as a gardener, replacing the old sprinkler system, raising and replanting flower beds. Outside the Holy Family Community Room she created places of beauty and color. Indoors she planned to refinish the three bedroom doors, the stand and desk in each bedroom at the Center, for a total of 250 doors. She proved herself to be a tireless worker.

After a cancer diagnosis in 1988, and a second diagnosis in 1997, she discovered an interest in writing poetry. Her first book of poetry, Poems to Wake Me Up, was published in 2013. A second book, Read, Relax, Reflect, was published sometime later. A third book was nearing completion, but was never published. Sister Margaret Anne Vonderahe was especially helpful to Jeanne as she wrote

and sought advice. The new found freedom to write at leisure seemed to suit Jeanne Cecile. Perhaps for her this was a form of sharing the heart. Chapter titles show a progression in her spiritual life, they include: Tough Times, Deepening, Emerging, Finding My Way, Coming Alive, Opening, And Life Goes On.

Those who knew Jeanne describe her in many ways; friendly and sometimes frank, independent, strong willed, practical, modest with often unassuming gentle ways, responsible, positive in her tastes, and restless. Jeanne's ministries were also varied; teacher, coach, computer programmer, founder of a tutoring center, gardener, coordinator of Carondelet Center during reconstruction.

While enjoying word crafting, she was also interested in genealogy, observing nature, reading to residents at a Care Center, and participating in an interfaith book club.

Given her somewhat restless nature, we realize she was a seeker and perhaps a dreamer. Her yearning for wholeness and

a deeper relationship with life was evident in her writing. As her health failed, she came to Holy Family Community on June 1, 2017. This transition was confusing to

Jeanne who relived her time as Coordinator of Carondelet Center. Jeanne, while you wrote, you stretched and expanded your horizons and you came to realize the immense love God has for you. We trust you found yourself, as we did, to be astonishing and wonderful. Now may you find rest from you labors, and enjoy the everlasting peace, affirmation, and Presence of our loving God. ❖

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ



i thank you God  
for this  
most amazing day  
for the leaping greenly  
spirits of trees  
and a blue true  
dream of sky;  
and  
for everything  
which is natural  
which is infinite  
which is yes

~ e.e. cummings