



Remembering

Sister Juliet Berber, CSJ
June 30, 1937—May 28, 2019

Sister Juliet's father, Jesus (Jack) Berber, born in La Piedad, Michuacan, Mexico arrived in the United States as a young man; her mother, Lucretia Mortineau, born in Caborca, Sonora, Mexico, was a young child, when her family settled in Los Angeles, California. Her father was the owner of a grocery store on Main Street when they married and settled in downtown Los Angeles. Their first daughter, born in Los Angeles on June 30 1937, was given the name Juliet Irma at her Baptism in St. Joseph's Church. Eight years later their only son, Arthur Henry (always called Henry) arrived. Then in 1950, Juliet was delighted when her prayers were answered and she finally had a little sister, Patricia. In later years the Berber family moved to 39th Street in the Liemert Park area of Transfiguration Parish. She and later Henry and Patricia were enrolled in the parish school

where Juliet first met the Sisters of St. Joseph. It was S. Miriam Joseph Larkin to whom she was most grateful for her love of music. Sister taught her piano and voice, both in elementary school and at St. Mary's Academy. She often thought her first idea of wanting to be a sister happened when she "hung around the convent" helping the sisters after school at Transfiguration. After she got her driver's license, she drove the St. Mary's sisters to after school events. She later said it was getting to know her teachers as they talked, laughed and enjoyed each other during these outings that "set the seal" on her decision to enter the convent. In June 1955, Juliet graduated from St. Mary's Academy. On the following September she entered the postulate of the Sisters of St. Joseph at the House of Studies. On March 19, 1956, she received the habit and the name

Sister John Lucy in honor of her parents. First vows were made in 1958; final vows on August 6, 1963. Later she chose to return to her Baptismal name. After receiving her bachelor's degree from Mount St. Mary's College and her lifetime teaching credential, she began her thirty four years as an elementary school teacher. Although she taught at Star of the Sea, San Francisco and St. Patrick's, San Diego, most of her assignments were in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles: St. Jane Frances, Santa Clara, St. Eugene, St. Odilia and finally to her delight she was sent to teach fourth grade at Transfiguration School from 1983 to 1990, followed by a year as the Religion Coordinator for K-8 grades. It should be mentioned that in 1980 she had earned certification as a catechist not only for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, but for any diocese in the state of California. Juliet loved her family, their cultural heritage and their accomplishments. She especially loved telling the story of the Berber family's founding of the grocery store and then the restaurant as it fit into the Mexican influence in the early years of Los Angeles. Juliet remembered helping in the store in her childhood and realizing her father was well known and well liked by his many customers. One customer for whom Jack Berber was the grocery supplier during the years she lived in the historic Avila Adobe, was Christine Sterling, the founder of Olvera Street. It was she who insisted that Jack open a restaurant on Olvera Street. That

dream came true for Jack Berber and his cousin, Pancho Cazares in 1959, when they opened La Luz del Dia restaurant. This became a family affair for many of the Berber relatives, eventually being owned by Juliet's brother, Henry and his son, Gregory. Juliet was probably the best advertiser for the restaurant. She made sure that all the sisters and other friends knew just where to dine if they were going to visit Olvera Street. She was proud of the restaurant's winning awards...THE BEST TAMALES IN LOS ANGELES... THE 2013 BEST MEXICAN FOOD NOMINEE and Huell Howser's filming of the restaurant for CALIFORNIA'S GOLD TV SERIES. She too enjoyed celebrating with her family at special events at the restaurant. In 1991, her ministry life changed when she was asked to assume the position of Assistant Administer at Carondelet Center. When her term ended in 2001, she moved to St. Bridget of Sweden Convent, Van Nuys as the driver for a group of retired sisters while also assuming the duties of the Day Care Supervisor at Our Lady of Grace School, Encino. In 2004, when the sisters moved from St. Bridget's Convent, she continued her service at Our Lady of Grace as the part time Librarian. In 2005, she returned to Carondelet Center to be the Sacristan, a position that involved not only the care of the Chapel, but also the preparations for the daily liturgies and all special ceremonies. It must be mentioned that Juliet was always dedicated to any situation in which she became

involved---C.S.J. projects or any other volunteer endeavors. She was a tireless and generous worker. When she was recognized for nine years of dedicated service to our senior sisters through the Carondelet Plan of summer programs and the Boutiques, she and Sister Roberta Ann were credited with "countless hours of preparations throughout the year and all the follow-up work." Many will agree if Juliet was asked to help, she would always say "yes." She was "Johnny on the Spot" and always dependable. Ordinarily Juliet was gentle and quiet, maybe even shy at times. However, whenever there were opportunities to use her musical talents she was more than willing to participate. She joined the college students and sang with the Mount Chorus. She was always one of the members of the Sisters' choir for Jubilees and other festive occasions. One sister described her, as "always having a song in her heart." Juliet dealt with health issues during her active ministry. However, in 2009, after a period of not feeling well, she felt the need for more consistent care and joined Holy Family Community. She was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. She participated in support groups and educational opportunities to understand her illness, the challenges and what she could do to continue to be as independent as possible. She resigned herself to this illness with courage and humility. She gratefully accepted all the services, but also wanted to participate in the activities...be they crafting, special presentations, outings and even exercise classes.

Until the last two years she led the singing for the nine days of the Christmas novena. At early morning Masses it was her voice that intoned the first Alleluia of the Gospel acclamation. Over the last year the memory loss phase of the disease set in and with it came much confusion and suffering. Still, when encountering her in the hallway or visiting in her room, there was always a welcoming smile even on days when she could not remember who we were or remember our names. A few weeks ago it seemed apparent that it was time to offer her Hospice support. She accepted with the same willingness and always with gratitude. On Tuesday evening, May 28th after a short period of instability, she became quiet with one of the CNA's at her bedside. She slipped peacefully away while staff held her hand and comforted her. Juliet often said, "I just want to do what I can and what God wants of me. I hope it is enough." Juliet, it is enough. Your new life is just beginning. Raise your voice in Alleluia, Alleluia and join the chorus where "the angelic voices sing." Sisters, friends, students, your parents and Henry are waiting for you. Truly it will be La Luz del Dia. Rest in the peace of God's love. ❖

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