



Remembering

Sister Jeanette Munick, CSJ
July 24, 1931—August 4, 2019

Sister Jeanette, formerly Sister John Margaret, was a native of Chicago, and the middle child of three; Raymond, Jeanette and John. Her father, John Munick, was born in New York, and her mother, Margaret V. Drasil, was born in DuBois, Pennsylvania.

Jeanette began her educational journey at St. Bartholomew Grammar School and Providence High School in the Chicago area. Then, on a work scholarship, she completed her requirements for her Bachelor's degree at DePaul University. Part of her work assignment included correcting papers for the faculty. She recalled, "It was fun watching classmates see their papers and grades, not knowing that I had corrected them."

After graduation from DePaul University in Chicago in 1945 with a BA degree, Jeanette held a few part-time jobs. Her family had moved to San Diego to be near her grandmother. She said, "Ever since I read stories about California, I longed to go there. And I recalled

how my sorority sisters teased me about becoming a nun." Sister joined her family in San Diego and then entered the CSJ Community at St. Mary's Academy in Los Angeles on September 15, 1947. She received the habit on March 20, 1948 and was given the religious name Sister John Margaret, in honor of her parents. In 1974 she changed her name back to her baptismal name of Jeanette.

Sister enjoyed telling stories about her early days of teaching grammar school. One time Sister Margaret Clare came without warning to observe Jeanette teach math. Jeanette became so flustered that Sister Margaret Clare said, "You know what, I'll teach the class and you watch." As a seventh grade teacher, Jeanette recalled, "Someone did my singing class so the students wouldn't run away from my voice."

In Martinez the pastor was the brother of Sister Robertine and Sister Laurentine. The convent was new and beautifully constructed and furnished. However, it was

located next to a house of ill repute.

Jeanette shared that the parents of their students often brought entire meals to thank the sisters for being there for their children. When Mother Rosemary Lyons visited St. Catherine's Martinez, she commented that this community in Martinez had the lowest food budget in the Province and wondered how they managed.

After teaching a few years in elementary schools she was assigned to Mount Saint Mary's College and, at the same time, she would pursue her Master's at USC. She received her M.A. in Sociology and became a member of the Mount faculty in 1953. In recalling that time she said that the Sisters at the Mount who, in her words were great women "welcomed me warmly and treated me like an equal although I was untried."

While teaching at the Mount, Jeanette shared an office with Sister Rebecca Doan, who asked her to help nursing students with English grammar and spelling. Jeanette got to know several students in the nursing classes and found them to be charming and full of personality. She and Rebecca were always disappointed when a student could not manage her required classes and had to drop out. In 1977 Jeanette returned to USC to earn her Ph.D. in Sociology with specialties in gerontology and social psychology.

Jeanette was a member of the Mount faculty for nearly twenty years. She was recognized as an advocate for understanding intercultural relations and enjoyed a year as an exchange professor at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota.

During her academic career, Jeanette received an Ethel

Percy Andrus Gerontology Center scholarship for continued study at USC. A highlight of her professional career was an invitation to teach a Cultural Anthropology course to the Lay Missionaries from Los Angeles Archdiocese. She said, "They were an interesting and inspiring group, including a great diversity of occupations from medical doctors, nurses and teachers, to electronic workers, carpenters, and secretaries, and, in one year there were five pilots in the group."

In 1969 Sister received a grant for study of anthropology at the University of Colorado. She was one of ten women of the thirty college teachers who were chosen by the National Science Foundation. The program was designed to complement the professional backgrounds of the selected teachers. Jeanette noted that the lead professor for the project had his picture on the cover of Time magazine shortly after the program ended. Jeanette continued her friendship with several of those who attended the program, often writing to them and sharing news with each other.

Called to care for her parents, Sister moved to San Diego and for the next two decades brought her expertise to Cathedral Plaza, a residence for seniors. After the death of her parents, she worked on the San Antonio de Pala Indian Reservation for a year. She was grateful for the opportunity to observe first hand the cultural practices and esteem for the elderly among the native Americans. She then returned to San Diego where she served as parish visitor for seven years, until her retirement to Carondelet Center in 2011, where she would live near her "beloved

Mount." At Carondelet Center Holy Family Community she shared her warm smile and enjoyed staying current on medical research and politics.

In 2008 Jeanette celebrated her 60th Jubilee as a Sister of St. Joseph. At that time she wrote, "A Jubilee is a time to reflect on how and where I have followed Jesus." Sister brought her unique gifts to many people and places over the years. Now, may she bask in the goodness and light of our gracious God.

This framed quotation from German poet Johann von Goethe had a special place in her room:

"We are shaped and fashioned by what we love." Jeanette's life, her studies in Sociology and Anthropology, reflect her deep and broad interests in how humankind interacts, relates with each other, achieves and/or fails in attaining goals. She saw all of this as her way of "following Jesus". ❖

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker

