



Remembering

Sister Ernestine Muñanan, CSJ

December 11, 1915 ~ September 20, 2019

In the state of Jalisco, Mexico, Nicholas Jimenez Munana of San Pedro Tlaquepaque and Maria Figueroa of Ciudad De Guzman met and married in the early 1900's. Both came from traditional Mexican Catholic families, the same they envisioned for themselves with the blessing of children. Edward arrived first in 1906, followed by Raymond in 1908 and then Charles in 1911. Their first daughter was born in Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico on December 11, 1915 and baptized Maria Ernestina, but she was always called Tina. In 1919, another daughter, Maria de la Luz, called Lucy, completed the family. No one was more delighted than Ernestine to have a sister. From that day on, she took seriously "looking after Lucy" even into their adult years. On February 12, 1939, Lucy also entered the Sisters of St. Joseph. She received the habit and the name Sister Charleen. Many times Charleen said she did not always want to accept

Ernestine's "big sister help" but admitted, "Ernie was usually right." Ernestine was grateful that she was blessed with a loving family. Both parents provided not only a religious atmosphere, but love and respect for family and others. Their father had been educated well by Franciscans and wanted the same for his children. He brought teachers into the home for instruction in music and the arts. He impressed on his children the importance of education as preparation for life.

As a sales representative for Eastman Kodak, their father frequently traveled to the United States. Eventually he decided to move his family from Mexico, to the United States primarily for educational opportunities. They settled first in Oxnard, CA, where their father easily found employment as a photographer. The children were enrolled at St. Joseph's Institute, later named Santa Clara School. This began the family's long

relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. In 1922, the family suffered the loss of their beloved mother at the age of 42 after a brief illness. Ernestine and Lucy were placed temporarily in a boarding school staffed by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Burbank, CA. The boys remained with their father until he found work with the Santa Fe Railroad and a home in Los Angeles so that the family could be reunited.

This also was a reuniting with the Sisters of St. Joseph. Ernestine and Lucy enrolled as boarders in the elementary school of St. Mary's Academy. Ernestine continued her high school years at the Academy, graduating in 1936. She enrolled at Woodbury Business College, which prepared her for the secretary position she held for a year. During this time she missed St. Mary's and the friendliness and kindness of two of her teachers, Sister Hortensia Lynch and Sister Adrienne Kennedy. She made her decision to enter the postulate at St Mary's on September 15, 1938. She received the habit and the name Sister Mary Juanita, March 19, 1939. First vows were made on March 19, 1941; final vows on August 15, 1944. Later she returned to her Baptismal name, Ernestine.

During her early years of teaching she spent summers at Mount St. Mary's College to complete her Bachelor's degree in Spanish along with a secondary credential. Her history and civics classes prepared her for becoming a United States citizen, which was conferred on September 26, 1941.

On the day after making first vows she traveled to Tucson, AZ, for her first mission in the Accounting Office of

St. Mary's Hospital. After just one year and a half she was assigned to her Alma Mater, St. Mary's Academy, to teach Spanish and Business Courses. For the rest of her teaching career until 1989, she taught in C.S.J. staffed high schools in California. She loved teaching and being with the students, always available for listening to their teenage woes. She found it easy to motivate them to develop their skills. Many attributed their success in the business world to her.

Ernestine had study abroad opportunities. In the summer of 1972, she was a member of a tour group studying European Comparative Cultures. To her delight in 1975, she went to Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico to teach English at El Instituto Jassa. Closer to home in 1957, she was given a study grant for a summer Seminar in Foreign Languages at the University of Southern California. If you asked Ernestine about her favorite things, she was quick to list her family first...She was grateful for the religious and educational atmosphere her parents provided for their children. Later in life her brothers and their children were always devoted to her and Charleen. One favorite summer visit was to their brother Charlie's home in Norfolk, VA.

Probably second and third on her list would be her love of travel and shopping almost always with Charleen. Both were ready to go on a minute's notice. Favorite places were visited more than once. From their mother's influence in childhood, both were always impeccably dressed for important occasions. The last occasion for Ernestine was her 80th Jubilee in 2019, as she smiled all the way

down the aisle greeting those she recognized. However another favorite thing should be noted... Ernestine loved to be a winner...at chess. Her father taught her well. She played any time, any place. In 1989, she fell and broke her back and spent months recuperating at Carondelet Center. During that time she recycled her secretarial skills into computer skills to be able to volunteer in the Development Office. In 1991, she accepted the invitation to become a full-time member of Holy Family Community. She participated in all the activities, especially the outings. She often appeared in a sister's doorway asking, "May I help you with anything?" For things done for her there was always a grateful "Thank you." At 103 years of age she amazed everyone as she guided her walker up and down the halls to see what was going on. Sometimes she would just sit in a parlor chair or a hallway bench, rosary in hand, responding to anyone who greeted her. With her hearing loss there was not much conversation, but to any "Hello, Ernestine," there was always the response, "Nice to see you." It was a surprise to all on September 16th when she was taken to St. John's Hospital due to severe back pain and low blood

pressure. Her nephew, Andy, arrived to be with her. She was able to hear on the phone from Spain her nephew and godson, Charlie and his wife, Carlita tell her of their love and prayers. She lingered while staff tried to do all that could be done. Fr. Anthony came to anoint her with Andy at her bedside. When her condition became critical, she was moved to ICU. After determining that nothing more could be done, the Palliative Care Team of St. John's removed the support devices and medications to allow her to be comfortable. Her family and Sisters were present to wait and pray together. She waited awhile listening for God's call before she breathed her good-bye on September 20, 2019, Maybe with these words of Blessed Louisa of Savoy, "Thank you, my beloveds. Farewell. I am going to Paradise. It is very beautiful there."

"Vaya con Dios," dear Ernestine. ❖

~ Sister Frances Baker and Sister Barbara Dugan with contributions from Andy and Charlie Munana.

