



Remembering

Sister Mary Frances Horan

March 28, 1921 - March 24, 2020

The seed of God's call to religious life was nurtured in Frances Mary by her loving and faith-filled family. This nurturing was especially true of her parents, William Stephan, who was from County Roscommon, Ireland, and her mother Katherine Teresa Sheeran, from Lancaster, England. She was also very close to her brother and three sisters. Her oldest brother was Francis, then Dorothy, Frances Mary, Barbara and Julie. Family always meant a great deal to Frances Mary. She remembered walking down the sidewalk holding hands, seven of them strongly linked, with their parents on either end of the little procession.

Her father was a fireman, offering safety and security to the city. Mrs. Horan also offered lovely examples of loving service. "Mother had a large beautiful Haveline dish and when my three sisters and I saw it on the table, we knew that one of us would be taking it to someone who needed it and would share our dinner."

Frances Mary also had a close relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph. She experienced the love and respect of the sisters during twelve years of schooling at Star of the Sea in San Francisco. The sisters also nurtured her religious vocation. In the sixth grade, Sister St. Joseph asked her if she ever thought of being a sister. Frances Mary answered, "Yes." And in her junior year, Sister Augustine asked her the same question. Again the answer was yes. At Star of the Sea, Frances belonged to a service club that regularly visited St. Anne's Home for the sick and aging. Her interest in others was noticed and appreciated. In 1939 she graduated from Star of the Sea Academy. When it came time to enter her parents were both proud and sad.

On the morning she left home in San Francisco, family and friends came to the Pacific Union Station to board the Daylight Train. Everyone was crying. A porter went to her sister, Dorothy, and said, "Lady, this train only goes to Los Angeles." Sister Augustine and Sister Clara accompanied the four young ladies, later known as Sister St. Ann Bromham, Sister Margaret Anne Healy, Sister Angela Marie Bovo, and Sister Mary Frances.

Frances Mary's entrance into the Community on September 15, 1939 had come as a surprise to many of her relatives and friends since she was considered to be talented in Ballet and other forms of dancing. They thought this might influence her future choices. However, she persevered in her vocation and received the habit on March 19, 1940 and was given the religious name Sister Wilma Therese. First vows followed on March 19, 1942, and final vows were pronounced on August 15, 1945. In 1968 she requested to be called Sister Mary Frances. Sister gratefully celebrated her 80th Jubilee as a woman religious in 2020.

Sister spent 39 very happy and fulfilling years in education and administration mainly in California. She had received a General Elementary credential, and later a Standard Secondary credential. During this time she earned a Master's Degree in Education and Supervision from the University of San Francisco.

Feeling drawn to a new ministry, she received certification in the National Association of Catholic Chaplains in 1987. For 19 years she served in St. Agnes Parish in Concord as Pastoral Associate, and found each day a blessing. A wonderful relationship evolved as staff and numerous volunteers became a team displaying compassion, generosity and creativity as they ministered to the spiritual and corporal needs of parishioners and the community at large. Sister taught several classes for the lay ministers on death and dying, ministry, and other topics.

In 2000 Sister decided to retire from full time ministry, but not from being active. She looked back on 60 happy years in religious life and 58 in ministry. She then moved forward to serve the "dear neighbor" in volunteer programs for the blind, adult literacy and in outreach to the sick and aging. Organizations like the Mt. Diablo Adult Literacy Council, Lions Blind Center, Madonna Manor Senior Residence, benefitted from her organizational and pastoral skills. She often relieved Sister Mary Adele St. Cyr and Sister Roberta Ann Russo on weekends at Madonna Manor. Found among Sister's papers, was a full page of volunteer organizations she had helped over the years. Sister truly had a heart filled with the desire to serve.

In 2020 Sister spoke of her gratitude for more than 80 years as a CSJ, and said she lived among inspiring women who lived and carried the CSJ Charism of God's grace, beauty, and power to others.

Much of Sister's life was taken with activities for others, as teacher, principal, pastoral associate. For her rare leisure moments, she enjoyed reading, taking leisurely walks, listening to good music, gardening and watching dancing, especially toe ballet. For two years she lived near her sister who required assistance after her daughter died. In 2019 Sister Mary Frances became a member of Holy Family Community at Carondelet Center. The transition to Los Angeles was not easy, given her many years of compassionate ministry in San Francisco and Concord, and the many deep relationships she had formed. In her many years of volunteer work she was able to combine her two great loves of education in spirituality and pastoral care.

Although a quiet and private person, Sister's influence was felt by many. She held many concerns and needs in her heart, praying often for those she loved. To be in her prayers was indeed a privilege. May she now intercede for our community and its many needs and ministries.

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ