



Sister Maureen Petrone, csj
January 25, 1945~April 1, 2020

On January 25, 1945, George and Ita McGuiness Petrone, residents of Yonkers, New York, welcomed their second child who would become companion, playmate, and faithful sister to Angela Patricia (Pat), five years older than Maureen. They named her "Georgette Maureen" after her Italian father, George, and in honor of Ita's Irish ancestral mode of honoring Mary. Indeed, those two ancestral lines were markedly significant throughout Maureen's life. She loved to tell the story of her father and mother meeting as Vaudeville performers in a New York theater—George as a singer and Ita as a dancer. Maureen inherited and exercised both talents fully. She had a beautiful singing voice and loved to dance.

A number of the McGuiness family had emigrated from Ballymartin, County Down in Ireland and settled in New York. In 1949, when Georgette was five years old, the Petrone family left New York to make a new home in California. Having been welcomed first by Aunt Mona, one of Ita's sisters, they settled first in Alameda City in the Bay Area. Eventually they chose to make a more permanent residence in Southern California where they lived first in Highland Park. George and Ita, having found employment at Mullen and Bluett in downtown LA, later established the family home in the area of St. Paul's parish on Washington Blvd. near Crenshaw. Pat and Georgette were enrolled in St. Paul's Elementary School where they received an excellent education under the guidance of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Mo has reflected that she was attracted to religious life by the Holy Cross Sisters who were her early teachers and she retained her affection for the Sisters throughout her life.

When Georgette was ready to enroll in secondary school, it was a natural choice for her to follow her sister Pat to Bishop Conaty High School, not too distant from St. Paul parish. It was there that she met the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet among eight different religious communities who were on the faculty. It did not take long for her to make her mark on life at Bishop Conaty. From the beginning she emerged as a leader of her class of more than 200 young women, eventually being elected Student Body president in her Senior year. During her time there, she was full-time, full throttle present with studies, sports, entertainment and co-curricular activities that included leadership responsibilities. In 1962, upon her graduation, she chose to follow her dream vocation by joining the group of 37 who entered community as Postulants at Carondelet Center in September 1962.

On August 6, 1963, Georgette received the habit and was given the name Sr. Maureen Anthony which she retained until given the option to change which she did by dropping "Anthony". While on the subject of names, she was often referred to as "Mo".

After pronouncing First Vows on August 8, 1965, Maureen was missioned to study in our Juniorate and also to be an Assistant Teacher in the 3rd grade at St. John Chrysostom in Inglewood. Thus her years as educator were launched. She taught at St. John Chrysostom in Inglewood; then was missioned to St. Joseph School in Tucson. During her time in Tucson and in summers following, she received her BA, MA and Standard Teaching Credential from the University of Arizona.

In 1969 Maureen was missioned to the Bay Area where she served at St. Jarlath School in Oakland, one of her favorite missions. During nine years at "Jarlath's", she taught several grades and, as Principal, was deeply appreciated by staff

and parishioners for her administrative gifts and loving outreach to families. To this day she is remembered by friends from that area. After a brief stint at Our Lady of Victory in Fresno, Maureen returned to the Bay area where she served as Principal for four years at St. Patrick's in West Oakland.

It was during this time span that her parents spent 10 years in Italy, caring for George's sister. Several times, Maureen and Pat had the opportunity to go to Italy and minister to their family there. Upon the death of his sister, George, who already was suffering from the illness that would take his life, together with Ita, returned to the United States. Pat and Maureen created a Care Plan for their parents while they resided in Oakland until their father died in 1984.

In 1985-1986, Mo was granted a Sabbatical during which she brought her energy and enthusiasm to the program, Ministry to Ministers in San Antonio. Having refreshed her spirit, Maureen accepted the position as Personnel Director for the Province in 1986 and moved to Los Angeles where she lived in community at Visitation Convent.

During her four years of service as Personnel Director, while she assisted many of our Sisters to assess anew their talents and interests, she also was looking at new frontiers of ministry for herself and entered a program at UCLA which would eventually lead to her gaining her MSW in 1994. Not satisfied with that achievement, she spent the necessary hours and gained the work experience needed to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in 1997. Maureen never allowed that license to expire and spent significant efforts to keep it active.

For 15 years, Maureen dedicated her significant energy and enthusiasm to ministering to patients and staff at Harbor UCLA Medical Center in Torrance. Notable among her achievements was leading a committee to establish a chapel at the hospital and being nominated as Employee of the month from among all LA County hospitals in 1999. For this she received recognition from the Department of Human Resources in LA County and a Certificate of Recognition from Supervisor, Don Knabe.

In the same way as her ministry skills were acknowledged in her hospital employment situation, so also Province community recognized those same gifts and talents and called her in 2007 to be a Regional for the areas of the South Bay and San Diego County. Mo's experience as a Medical Social Worker and community builder were immediately put to use. With her medical experience as resource and compassionate caring as her gift to others, she assisted several Sisters to make life-changing moves that were to their benefit. Those who experienced her guidance and care in her role as Regional, whether personal or institutional, were grateful for her leadership.

Maureen's last ministries began with high hopes of being able to use her social-medical background as a member of our Province Health Care Team and then transitioned into her assignment to be the Contact Sister for Holy Family Community members. It was not a surprise to those who knew her that one of the first things she did was to decorate her office. That might seem to be a trivial detail but to Mo it was important.

She had a set of skills that were always part of who she was--probably inherited from her father, a painter. She loved to paint, to fix things, to find gadgets that could be helpful--she was, in this aspect of her life, a craftsperson who found joy in scraping walls, painting--repairing what needed to be fixed--discovering the secrets of technology and communication. Her office in Holy Family Community is a small testament to those skills that she herself treasured and were useful for so many.

Maureen found great joy and satisfaction in being able to assist many of our Sisters in Holy Family Community. Her ministry was interrupted by a bout with cancer in July 2018. Rejoicing in her apparent recovery, she returned to her ministry with new fervor until she was interrupted by a recurrence of that disease in late 2019. She was hospitalized during most of Lent this year, enduring much pain and the isolation called for by the pandemic.

God mercifully called her to a graceful passage to eternity in the early morning of April 1 (April Fool's Day)--a day one might call appropriate for one who in her own words said, "Clowning around is something that I really enjoy doing." We have the pictorial memories which often show her in costume with face paint, with words and gestures that call us to the entertaining side of life. She has all the answers now and calls us not to weep, not to mourn, but draw strength from the Lord of the Dance; go forth and care for the dear neighbor with love, compassion, knowledge and creativity.

Maureen, Mo--may you be at peace, taking care of, entertaining, and decorating the high arches of the eternal realm.

~ Written by Sister Eileen Mitchell, CSJ