



## **Sister Juanita Mary Meyer**

March 12, 1938 - December 22, 2020

Juanita Barbara Meyer was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on March 12, 1938. Her father, John Aloysius, was born in St. Joseph, Minnesota, and her mother, Viola Catherine Bromenschenkel, in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Shortly after their wedding they moved to Cincinnati, and later to Denver. Juanita explained that her father liked the song, "Juanita" and wanted her named after the song, although both parents were of German descent. This was prophetic because Juanita liked to sing. Juanita described herself as "an active, outdoor child."

Ronald was her older brother, and Marilyn her younger sister. When a doctor recommended a warmer climate for her mother's health, they moved to Los Angeles when Marilyn was still a baby.

Juanita began her education in a public school, then transferred to a Catholic school as soon as there was an opening. She attended St. Michael School from grades 2 - 6. It was at this time she first thought of being a sister. After grade 6 she attended St Eugene School, then St. Mary's Academy. "The warmth and joy of my Glee Club teacher, Sister Helen Clare, inspired me to want to follow her example and become a sister. She supported me in the preparations to enter. The September after graduation, in 1956, I entered the convent along with 67 other young women."

After six months, Juanita received the habit on March 19, 1957, and was given the religious name Sister Juanita Mary. She pronounced her first vows on March 19, 1959, and made final profession on August 6, 1964. Sister Juanita received a B.A. from the Mount. She was excited about teaching, which she did in five different schools in California for 17 years. Juanita loved the children. She earned a California Teaching Credential, and later received a M.A. in Education from San Jose State University. Sister loved teaching music to the children, and held guitar classes after school. She belonged to several choral groups over the years.

Sister then ministered in Pastoral Care at St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson, served as a Religion teacher and Coordinator at St. Anselm's, and as Director of Religious Education at St. Jerome's Parish in Los Angeles. In 1993 Sister completed her M.A. in Christian Spirituality at Creighton University. Later, while Sister was at Derham in St. Paul for Personal Renewal, she began CPE studies toward being a chaplain. For 12 years, Juanita served as Executive Assistant at the University of San Diego.

Sister received an Exceptional Service Award as part of the University of San Diego's Performance Management Program in 1998. Only forty-two employees out of the 500 staff employees were awarded this honor.

Sister said her "favorite ministry" was caring for her nieces and nephew. For three years, different summers she was able to be with them. She cherished visits with her family. She proudly shared pictures of every family member, especially of the newest baby.

In 2007 Sister celebrated her Golden Jubilee and wrote, "God's constant love has sustained me in the dark valleys and nourished me in the dry deserts as well as on the plateaus and mountain peaks. Sisters, family, and friends have supported me on my journey. My heart is full of gratitude at the wonder of it all!"

Sister was able to travel to Israel, Japan and Hawaii. In 2002 Juanita and Irma Araneta visited Japan. "What a treasured time we had in Japan, and what extraordinary memories our sisters helped us create." She found beauty and joy in many life experiences. From her time at Derham, Sister grew in appreciation of herself and all of creation. Beliefs she took with her from the Derham experience were: "I am good, everyone else is good, life is challenging, and God is with me."

Love was one of Juanita's greatest strengths. She loved people. Anyone who met Sister would soon be acquainted with her kindness. She reached out to others in quiet gestures of help, in sympathetic concern. She often voiced affirmation for others and offered words of kindness and solicitude. Her willingness to listen was greatly appreciated by others. Sister especially prized integrity and honesty. Her chronic struggle with asthma seasoned her and made her a more compassionate and understanding person. Reflecting on her illness, at one time Juanita wrote, "Asthma and anxiety are a call to trust, and my response is to grow daily toward complete trust in God's love for me."

In 2010 Sister moved to Carondelet Center for health reasons. After one year, on May 7, 2011 Sister joined the Holy Family Community and served others as Eucharistic Minister, at the switchboard, as a member of the choir for liturgy, a volunteer in the development office, Holy Family Support Staff as a companion to appointments and helped with other needs throughout the Center.

Juanita's recent illness, rapid decline and death took all of us by surprise. In those final days it was clear that she was at peace with her God who continue to companion her and assure her of God's unconditional love.

And now, gentle Juanita, may the God who made you, and never abandoned you, receive your compassionate soul into the fullness of life.

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ