



Sister Dennis Mary McFadden, CSJ  
November 3, 1926 - September 8, 2021

Nancy Mc Fadden was born and raised in Oakland, California. Her Irish immigrant parents, Dennis McFadden and Mary Curran both came from County Donegal, Ireland to settle in the Bay area. Nancy felt history touch her life when the San Francisco/ Oakland Bay Bridge took the property on which her family home was situated. Her family relocated to St. Jarlath Parish where Nancy and her two sisters, Marge and Mary Ellen, were all raised and taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. In high school she was educated by the Sisters of Notre Dame deNamur.

After high school and during the war Nancy spent a stint as a welder at the Alameda Naval Station and later attended Holy Names College for a year. However, a speck of CSJ "gold dust" from grade school days remained in Nancy's heart. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on February 11, 1947 in Los Angeles. She received the habit on August 15, 1947 and was given the name Dennis Mary after her Mom and Dad. She made First vows on August 15, 1949 and final vows on August 15, 1952. She celebrated her Golden Jubilee as a woman religious in 1997, her Diamond in 2007, and her 70th anniversary in 2017.

Dennis Mary ministered in education throughout the province starting at St. John Chrysostom, then St. Stanislaus in Lewiston Idaho, where she first saw snow! Then she went back to her home parish, St. Jarlath, where she taught and also was involved in The Deaf Ministry of the Province. After five years of deaf work, a highlight of her life, she was assigned as Principal and eighth grade teacher at St. Eugene's, Inglewood. This was her last elementary school experience before she was missioned to St. Bernard High School, "where I began my dream of being a social studies teacher, and where I never thought of doing anything else but making history come alive for my students."

After her dream years at St. Bernard's, she became a high school administrator at Bishop Montgomery and at St. Mary's Academy. As an administrator Dennis Mary was greatly respected for her dedication, talent and fairness. She was a team player.

Later in her ministry Dennis Mary "came home" to her teaching career at St. Monica's, spending twenty-two of her happiest years where she was loved by faculty and students, alike. She often said "why did I ever leave the classroom... I look back now after all these years on what I consider one of my greatest accomplishments, teaching."

Her love of sports and knowledge of teams provided an opportunity for animated conversation with students outside of academics. Dennis Mary was a true Fighting Irish supporter from her youth, and after spending a semester in a renewal program at Notre Dame her wardrobe had many Irish outfits. A point of interest, she died on the feast of "Our Lady of Notre Dame."

Dennis Mary's early morning routine always started with prayer time and a cup of coffee. She spent much time praying and remembering family, friends, colleagues, and students over the years. She was an avid reader, especially historical novels, and both Celtic and current spiritual writers. Her annual retreats were always a priority for Dennis Mary. Love of community and dedication have been a hallmark of her life.

Dennis Mary had a great love for language and was astute at proofreading- a gift she shared for years helping to edit DESIGNS, the province weekly newsletter. Her quick humor Irish wit were evident in any gathering.

Long ago when Dennis Mary was a new teacher at St. Jarlath's, Sister Serena said to her "she loved her life and was happy in her work". Dennis said she has lived by these words and finds them so true of her own life to this day. A former principal and friend says of her: "I have not met a person who knows Dennis Mary who does not aspire to be even closer to the wonderful person she is."

"God and (your Blessed Mother) saw you getting tired, so (they) put (their) arms around you and whispered, "Come to me." With tearful eyes we watched you fade away. Your golden heart stopped beating, your hard working hands at rest. God broke our hearts to prove He only takes the best. "(Unknown)

Rest in peace, Denny, rest in peace.

~ Sister Ann Patricia O'Connor, CSJ