



Sister Miriam Clare Burkett, CSJ
May 27, 1920 ~ September 2, 2021

Sister Miriam Clare Burkett was born on May 27, 1920 in Fullerton, California—the second child of Frederick Albert Burkett and Mabel Lillian Goss. Although her parents were not church going, they raised their four children—Albert, Elinor (Sister Miriam Clare), Sara Jean, and JoAnn—to excel in love of neighbor and awareness of Christian principles.

Elinor graduated from Laguna High School and spent two years in pre-nursing courses at Berkley. Her studies were interrupted by diagnosis of a spinal tumor. However, she fully recovered from surgery for this and finished her nursing studies with the Daughters of Charity in Los Angeles at St. Vincent's. She was baptized before her graduation from this program. At this time, she began her spiritual journey, wondering why she had survived the operation and asking what was she to do on this earth.

Her only contact with the Sisters of St. Joseph was with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange at the time of her spinal surgery. While she was in the hospital recovering from this, a CSJ postulant came and talked with her, and later a priest by the name of Fr. Jenks referred her to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. Before entering Sister worked as a nurse at St. Joseph's hospital in Orange and at St. Vincent's hospital in Los Angeles.

She entered religious life on February 11, 1945, received the habit on August 15, 1945, made first vows on August 15, 1947, and made Final Vows on August 15, 1950.

Her first mission in 1947 was to St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson, where she remained for about 30 years. Her nursing assignments were diversified, serving as nurse in the old Sanitarium Round Building, night Supervisor, instructor in the School of Nursing, surgical and medical floor Supervisor, Head Nurse in the Nursery and a teacher of Nurse Aides, all of which involved loving care of staff and patients. In 1961, Sister re-established the Convent Infirmary as a full medical unit and served as the Supervisor for the next four years. In 1969, she and Sister Margaret Walsh began the Pastoral Care Department, where Sister Miriam Clare lovingly ministered for five years, then returned to work in the Infirmary. When the elderly and infirm Sisters transferred to Daniel Freeman, Sister moved to Los Angeles to continue her ministry in nursing. A shorter assignment brought her to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Pasco.

Anyone who listened to Sister realized that she possessed a broad knowledge not only of nursing, but also of many subjects. She was a person of wisdom, who reflected on matters and prayed about them. Her later studies included Rehab Nursing, Gerontology, and in 1988, Sister chose to study pastoral ministry as a CPE student at St. John's Hospital in Oxnard.

Few people knew Sister played the violin as a child and became quite proficient. This interest in music led to her entertaining the Sisters on the mandolin and ukulele. Sister also loved classical music. Her interest in travel brought her to many states and to Hawaii. She also traveled to England, Europe, Paris, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and in 1994 to LePuy, France, with her sister.

The Pima Council on Aging in Tucson awarded her a certificate "The Peers Award of Excellence," for 8 years Advocacy Service in Nursing Homes as Special Ombudsmen Designate. This fledgling ministry offered her the opportunity to use all her nursing skills of observation and then advocating for the powerless. In 1970, Sister had a nursing aide book published under the supervision of Sister Marguerite Scherer.

Sister Miriam Clare usually experienced a smooth transition to new locations and new ministries. This must have been a result of her total openness and desire to be about God's will for her, wherever it took her. She felt it was the right time to come to Carondelet Center, and found it brought relief and renewed energy. She served as a Pastoral Minister to the Sisters in Holy Family and a companion to Sr Joan of Arc on her Alzheimer's journey. At the time of her transition to St. John of God Retirement Home in July, she was quite frail but all noted her calm and gentle presence. She died peacefully at St. John of God on September 2, 2021.

Once she wrote about being on call as a nurse, that occasionally she felt a strong awareness that she was not alone in difficult situations. While on staff at Villa Maria House of Prayer, she spoke of "experiences of Presence with deep peace and joy." Sister was a woman of prayer, throughout her life one sensed a calm abiding with God, whatever the situation.

Sister wrote, "I have been privileged to journey with remarkable women and would do it over again. The CSJ's have inspired, supported and accepted me throughout my sojourn in the Religious Life."

And we, Sister, have been privileged to know you and the loving support and affirmation you offered to all you encountered. You epitomized a Sister of St. Joseph, a woman of gentleness, peace and joy...forever fervent in spirit.

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker