



Sister Marion Donohue

October 1, 1925 - September 18, 2021

If anyone could claim deep roots in San Francisco, it would be Marion Patricia, the first child born on October 1, 1925, to Antoinette Meagher Donohue and Raymond Thomas Donohue. History of her Irish family reached back many years, especially stories about her Meagher grandparents, who survived the earthquake and fires of 1906. Their children's families also settled in San Francisco in neighborhoods not far from the grandparents' home in Noe Valley. In later years Marion would tell of her childhood home, its view of the San Francisco Bay and "the City" she dearly loved.

In the midst of the Depression in 1929, a baby sister, Joan, brightened Marion's world at the same time her parents were choosing a new home on 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the West Portal District, which also had a view of the ocean. Across the street was St. Cecilia's Church and a brand new parish school. Marion joined the first class of first graders. She was an "eager, attentive, perfection-oriented student." These same traits were evident in all her later educational endeavors.

During the years at St. Cecilia's, Marion and Joan became the big sisters to Raymond in 1936 and Vincent in 1938. Although having two brothers made life more interesting, Marion claimed that the two highlights of her early years were walking across the Golden Gate Bridge on the first day of its opening, May 27, 1937 and enjoying San Francisco's Golden Gate Exposition on Treasure Island in 1939.

After graduation from St. Cecilia's in 1939, Marion attended St. Brigid's High School in Pacific Heights. Always an inquiring student, it was during her high school years that her preferred area of study became apparent. She became "the shining star of the Science Department."

World War II overshadowed her high school years as did a great loss for the Donohue family with the death of Raymond, their beloved husband and father in February 1943.

Marion had thought often about religious life from the example of her teachers, the Sisters of the Holy Names and the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During her senior year she joined girls from Star of the Sea High School on a train trip to Los Angeles to attend the St. Joseph's Day reception ceremony of their

friend, Ethelbert Doucette. All was new to Marion: the music and ceremony in the chapel of St. Mary's Academy; seeing her friend receive the habit and the name, Sister Robert Joseph as a Sister of St. Joseph. The girls spent a few days at St. Mary's and interacted with some of the Sisters and students. After returning home Marion told others, "The sisters were so friendly, helpful and hospitable. I was really impressed and seriously considered asking to enter the Sisters of St. Joseph." It was after graduation from St. Brigid's, June 1943, as the call to religious life persisted in her, she made her decision. On September 6, 1943, Marion returned to St. Mary's Academy to enter the postulate of the Sisters of St. Joseph. On March 19, 1944, she received the habit and the name, Sister Raymond Joseph. In later years she chose to be Sister Marion.

Although she referred to the years in the novitiate as strict, she focused on the future as she observed professed sisters at St. Mary's. They always seemed happy. She persevered and pronounced first vows on March 19, 1946 and final profession on August 15, 1949.

Her first assignments as a teacher were in parish schools in California: St. Brigid's, Los Angeles and St. Catherine of Siena, Reseda. She loved teaching impressionable first graders. However, this was not in her future. She completed a Bachelor of Science degree at Mount St. Mary's College along with earning a California Secondary Credential. Later she was recruited and offered a grant to join the Science Advancement Program at Stanford University, through which she completed her Master of Science in 1958.

It was not a surprise that her teaching career would focus on classes in Chemistry, Physics and Math in High Schools staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph as well as assuming positions as Assistant and Principal. She joined the Science Department at Mount St. Mary's College during 1964-65 and also taught in the Mount's summer sessions. While at the Mount she encountered Fr. James O'Reilly, the Mount's Chaplain and faculty member, with whom she had lively discussions about not only Physics and Math, but also Philosophy. One day he told her, "I have some required science reading for you." It was Teilhard de Chardin's *The Divine Milieu*. She was so inspired by Chardin's thinking, she proclaimed, "It became the basis of my spirituality and religious life."

It is hard to remember how many CSJ committees and focus groups for which Marion volunteered and served. Those who served with her appreciated her analytical approach to the subject at hand and then her always thoughtful contributions to the discussions. Attendance at Province Chapters, Assemblies and celebrations in Los Angeles and sometimes in St. Louis were always on her schedule. It was at these times others got to know her not only for her knowledge of various subjects; but also her enjoyment of just ordinary conversations and her quiet sense of humor.

Marion enjoyed good health in her early years which allowed time to spend in the "great outdoors." Later she faced cancer complications and eventually the need for dialysis. No doubt a challenge to her priorities, but with her usual determination that "life is worth living" she faithfully followed her treatment schedule for seventeen years.

Others outside the Community also valued her expertise. With Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, she co-founded the Family Law Center in Oakland, CA and mentored the volunteers in assisting those in need of help through various legal matters. This led to her living in Larkspur, CA and becoming a knowledgeable, well-respected Court-appointed Conservator for many elderly residents of the East Bay. It was a work she

loved and continued until she finally agreed the time had come to list herself as "retired" in the CSJ Province Directory.

After her decision about retirement was made, Marion moved in 2020, to St. Joseph's Convent in St. Thomas Parish, San Francisco. To her delight, it had a view of the Ocean. Although the Pandemic restrictions allowed little time with family and old friends, she could now enjoy time for herself and joining the sisters for prayers, meals and CSJ ZOOM meetings. However, this special time did not last.

On Thursday, September 16, 2021, Marion complained of chest pains and was taken to UCSF Hospital for observation. Due to Hospital restrictions, visitors were limited. On Friday Sister Noreen O'Connor assisted the hospital Chaplain as Marion received the Anointing of the Sick. During the day she was alert with those in her room, but disturbed that "things were too noisy." Early Saturday morning, the family and sisters were notified that Marion's condition had changed. Sisters Theresa and Lorraine and Marion's niece, Jeanine, arrived to find her unresponsive. Hours passed as Marion quietly ended her earthly journey. Jeanine and Sister Rosheen were at her bedside as she died peacefully at 1:00 p.m. September 18, 2021.

In words from Teilhard de Chardin's *The Divine Milieu*, "By virtue of Christ's rising, nothing ever kills inevitably, but everything is capable of becoming the blessed touch of the divine hands, the blessed influence of the will of God upon our lives."

Dear Marion, you are in the hands of God. Rest in everlasting peace.

~ Sister Barbara Dugan, CSJ with contributions from Marion's sister,  
Joan and a Jubilee interview with Sister Francis Baker, CSJ

*For reference....Chardin.... "By virtue of Christ's rising, nothing ever kills inevitably, but everything is capable of becoming the blessed touch of the divine hands, the blessed influence of the will of God upon our lives."*