



Sister Madeline Clancy, CSJ

July 12, 1925 - January 10, 2022

Madeline was born in San Francisco at 12:15 pm on Sunday, July 12th, 1925, the 3rd child to William Francis and Madeline Elizabeth Clancy. Her brother Bill was just 3 and her sister Carmelita was to turn two in a few months. It would be 7 more years before her younger brother Tom arrived to complete the Clancy family. Growing up during the Great Depression, money was tight, but she enjoyed a close-knit family, as well as the support of aunts, uncles and cousins. She loved growing up in San Francisco and recalled how she delighted in running up and down the hills of her neighborhood. In fact, so much about San Francisco seemed to elicit joy-filled memories ... and even when she moved far from her beloved city, she remained a fervent advocate and fan of all things San Franciscan ... the parks, bridges, the fog, and of course, the Forty-Niners and Giants.

Madeline began her formal education in public school and transferred in fifth grade to Corpus Christi Parish School. Each year, the city offered a single scholarship awarded to a graduating eighth grader. The winner was able to attend, tuition-free, any Catholic high school. Madeline took the test with the hope of being able to attend Star of the Sea. She won the scholarship and thus began her lifelong relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

Following graduation Madeline took a government job for two years in the Russian Liaison office and after the war worked for Southern Pacific Water and Power. Her mother, who had suffered for many years with heart complications, passed away during that time. Living with this profound loss, Madeline began to seriously consider her future.

Madeline was gifted with a keen mind and a desire to be for others. She thought about the life of sisters and was attracted to their ability to bring wisdom and leadership to the arenas in which they served. In the fall of 1946, she boarded the train to Los Angeles to become a Sister.

As it happened, there were two professed sisters of St. Joseph on the same train bound for Los Angeles, with whom she enjoyed great conversation during the long journey. When they arrived in Los Angeles, there was a car waiting to take them to St. Mary's Academy. When they reached the Academy, all the Sisters in residence were waiting outside to greet them. Madeline was extremely impressed by the overwhelming excitement at her arrival, only to find out that the two sisters she had travelled with were the Superior General and her assistant from St. Louis!

Madeline received the Habit on March 19, 1947, and was given the name Sr. William Joseph. She remembers her years in the novitiate as being filled with study and lots of rules. She loved learning and seemed to be moving quite naturally into studying science. At the same time, she was deeply intrigued by the spiritual life and wanted permission to read about the mystics. She approached her novice mistress with the request to read The Interior Castle. Deciding that she was not ready for such intense spirituality, the superior did not grant Madeline's request and instead offered the same book to Sr. Cecilia Louise, who admitted later that she had absolutely no interest in reading it! Madeline and CL enjoyed sharing this story for years. Madeline made first vows in August of 1949, and final vows August 15, 1952. Once professed, Sr. Madeline spent the next four years honing her teaching skills as an elementary teacher at Our Lady of the Angels in San Diego, St. James in Redondo Beach, and Santa Clara in Oxnard.

In September of 1953, Madeline began her long career in high school education, primarily teaching the sciences: biology chemistry, and physics. Over the course of the years, she was assigned to Star of the Sea in San Francisco, St. Joseph Academy in Prescott, Santa Clara in Oxnard, Alemany in the San Fernando Valley, St. Joseph in Lakewood, and St. Bernard in Playa del Rey. Not surprisingly, her reputation as a masterful educator and her natural leadership ability resulted in her appointment as principal in four high schools: St. Joseph Lakewood, Star of the Sea, Bishop Garcia Diego in Santa Barbara, and Alverno High School in Sierra Madre.

Throughout her years of teaching, Madeline was always engaged as well in LEARNING. She sought out and was awarded grants that allowed her to attend Notre Dame, Brown University, and Harvey Mudd, where she successfully competed with the best of male scientists. As well, she read as much as she could about anything that could possibly help in her teaching, school administration, spiritual life, and life in general. She could be just as happy being engrossed in scientific journals, books by Thomas Merton, Joan Chittister, and C. S. Lewis, losing herself in a complex mystery or cheering on a football team. The breadth of her interests contributed to her depth and vitality as an educator, religious, friend, and family member.

With the exception of the two years spent at Star of the Sea and her annual one-week home visit during our rather "cloistered" years, Madeline had limited opportunity to connect with her family. As our lives changed, an opportunity to minister in Northern California and be closer to family became possible. She applied for Superintendent of Schools in Stockton, a position she held for eight years, followed by nine years at Carondelet High School, allowing

Madeline to spend quality time with her siblings Bill, Tom, and Carmelita. These were cherished times of getting to know well and enjoy each of their families.

Her position as Dean of Studies at Carondelet High School was particularly fulfilling for Madeline. She took advantage of every opportunity to challenge and support teachers. She encouraged creativity and immersed herself in seeking out and implementing programs that would contribute to excellence in teaching and a strong student curriculum.

In her final year at Carondelet, Madeline recognized that her glaucoma had advanced to the point that it was time for a change. She stopped driving and announced that in June she would be moving to Carondelet Center.

She came to the Center with diminished sight but unbounded energy. She loved technology and was quite expert and current in her computer skills. Along with her keen mind and exceptional organizational skills, she proved invaluable to the finance office. What was most important during her years at Carondelet Center, however, was the opportunity to become reacquainted with the sisters in retirement. She spent hours each day visiting sisters and engaging them in "meaningful" conversation. Recognizing that they each had so much to share, she began ordering books and inviting sisters into conversation circles. Noticing that the sisters in residence seemed to disappear after dinner each night, she began her campaign to bring "frivolity" into their evenings. She set up card tables in the Magdalen parlor, bought lots of candy, and let everyone know that they were invited for games each night after dinner. It wasn't long before the Magdalen parlor became the social hub each evening with a couple of tables of cards or games.

When Madeline joined the Villa Community in 2009, she continued to be focused on recognizing and bringing out the best in individuals and in the group as a whole. She continued hosting conversation groups and encouraging everyone to make time for each other ... for community prayer, for meaningful sharing, and always for fun. She endeared herself to everyone as the "senior sister" of the house.

As is true of anyone, a chronology of events, or identifying places in time, can never fully capture the essence of a person. We all struggle through life's challenges, we seize opportunities, and we rejoice in relationships that allow us to better understand ourselves, our world, and our God. In her 96 and a half years, Madeline embraced it all, living life to the full.

She loved to read, to listen to the news and the commentators' reflections, and to engage others in discussion about what was happening in the world, our church, and in our CSJ community. She had little tolerance when anyone was discounted for any reason. She lived her many years conscious of the various levels of discrimination that hold people down. She resented the resistance to women's exercise of leadership in the church and the hierarchical structures that define so many of our institutions and organizations. She was a feminist, and, as we know, she was not afraid to speak truth to power when it was warranted.

Her life stands as a testament to what she believed - that we are made to love and be loved.
Madeline, may you now enjoy for all eternity the fullness of that belief.

~ Written by Sister Jill Napier, CSJ