



Sister Doris Villeneuve, CSJ

July 31, 1928 – March 25, 2022

Born on July 31, 1928, Doris Ann Villeneuve was the second of four children born to Frank Villeneuve, a chiropractor, and Elizabeth (Fahey) Villeneuve in Syracuse, New York. Doris spent her formative years in an idyllic family home where the importance of family, education and service to God were preached, but more importantly, practiced.

Doris fondly recalled her childhood home: “We had a three-story home and basement plus apple, cherry and pear trees in the backyard, and a park across the street.” Doris shared this idyllic setting with her parents, siblings Mary (Villeneuve) Junod, Alfred “Fritz” Villeneuve, and Margaret “Margot” (Villeneuve) Alberg – each of whom predeceased her. Underscoring the importance of family, Doris’ family shared their home with her mother’s sister, Mary “Mamie” Fahey, who lived there her entire adult life.

Doris’ siblings, were her closest childhood companions, and life-long friends. Their tight family bond was forged while engaging in childhood games and activities, which included her early passion for speed skating. In her teenage years, she recalled having “braids that reached down to [her] knees”, which surely waved behind her as she competed and “won awards for ice-skating.”

Doris attended St. Patrick Elementary and High School in the “Tipperary Hill” section of Syracuse, New York. While fiercely proud of her French-Canadian roots (quickly correcting any who dared mispronounce her surname, stressing it was pronounced “Vil-Nev”), Doris was equally proud of her Irish ancestry (frequently singing Irish melodies which had been sung by her mother).

Her life-long devotion to God was likely fanned by her father, who made frequent pilgrimages to Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, and her Irish Catholic mother. Her parents, thus, were undoubtedly proud when Doris entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 15, 1946, shortly after graduating from St. Patrick’s. Doris received the habit and took the religious name of Sister Francis Elizabeth on March 19, 1947 (which she used until 1967 when she chose to return to her baptismal name). First vows followed on March 19, 1949, and she pronounced final vows on August 15, 1952. Records indicate all these ceremonies took place at the St. Joseph Seminary in Troy, New York.

Doris’ obvious passions for learning and education were likely instilled by her father, who trekked to Iowa in the 1800’s to study chiropractic care. Indeed, each of the Villeneuve children attended and graduated from college. Looking back Doris said, “I attended St. Rose College and received a degree in math and physics in 1964. I later earned a Master’s degree in math from Schenectady, New York’s Union College.” Doris sought to impart her knowledge to others, teaching children and teens for over 30 years.

While at the Albany Province, Doris taught elementary grades for 6 years, and then high school for 23 years, teaching math and physics. Doris was a natural and gifted teacher. Her joy of teaching was such that, when finished in the classroom, Doris could frequently be found providing additional instruction to her students, and more than one of her many nieces and nephews.

A series of tragedies befell the family in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Her mother and father died within hours of each other after being involved in an automobile accident shortly after moving to Los Angeles in 1967. A year later, her sister Mary’s children, Mary and Kevin Junod, died in a tragic accident on Mt. Baldy outside of Los Angeles. In 1970, her brother-in-law, William Burke, died suddenly, leaving her sister Margaret (“Margot”) alone in Syracuse to raise seven

young children. Each tragedy strengthened already strong family bonds between Doris and her siblings, and their children.

Being geographically close, Doris demonstrated her commitment to family, frequently trekked from Albany to Syracuse to assist in the raising of her sister's Margot's seven young children. Doris did not hesitate in devoting an entire summer driving from Syracuse to Los Angeles and back with Margot and her seven children to visit her brother Fritz and sister Mary, both of whom had relocated there years earlier, and their families.

When the last of her siblings, Margot, and her family joined Fritz and Mary in Los Angeles a few years later, Doris made an emotional plea to transfer from the Albany Province to the Los Angeles province so that she could be close her brother, sisters and their respective families. Her request for a transfer was granted in 1978.

After her transfer to Los Angeles, Doris quickly became a part of the Los Angeles Province and generously gave of herself to her local community. Doris "taught math at St. Bernard High School, Playa del Rey, as well as math and physics at St. Mary's Academy, where [she] also served as vice-principal." She easily made lasting friendships, was ready to help in any way possible, teaching, assisting as vice-principal, and helping in the treasurer's office at St. John Chrysostom.

She celebrated her 60th Jubilee in 2012. There was reason to celebrate her 60 years as a woman religious. She was a woman dedicated to the Congregation and therefore easily adjusted to transferring to the Los Angeles Province after 29 years of teaching in New York.

After years of teaching in New York and then Los Angeles, she joined the Holy Family Community at Carondelet Center on April 28, 2010, where she began her ministry of prayer and presence. She often applauded the speakers and events that pleased her, bringing smiles and appreciation to others.

At Carondelet Center and St. John of God, she was delighted by frequent visits by her siblings, sister-in-law Mary Anne Villeneuve, the Burke nieces and nephews, the Junod nieces and nephews, the Villeneuve nieces and nephews, and

her many great nieces and nephews as well as students whose lives Doris had touched in innumerable ways. Those visits were indeed fitting for a Sister, aunt, mentor, sibling and person who showed by her great interest in others the importance of family, education and service to God.

Now may her sweet soul dwell in joy and peace with the dear members of her family who were taken so suddenly from her.

*~ Sister Frances Baker with contributions by her nephew Paul Burke*