



Sister Margaret Murray, CSJ

May 21, 1947 ~ December 15, 2022

Born in Portsmouth, Virginia in 1947, Margaret Lee Murray was part of a large family that moved frequently while her father was on active duty in the Navy in the US and abroad. Peggy was dearly loved by her Dad and Mom who called her “Porkchop”. Her parents, Russell Lerey Murray and Betty Jane Schmitt ultimately settled in San Diego where Margaret met the Sisters of St. Joseph at Cathedral Girls’ High School. With her five siblings, Kathleen Ann, Peggy, Jim, Jane, Lynn and Kevin, she enjoyed many hours of fun at the beaches of Guam, Cuba, and San Diego, frequently playing backyard volleyball or tennis.

Margaret excelled in school and was an honor student. Sister Rita Scherrei, who taught Peggy fourth year Latin, recalled she was a brilliant student. Rita and Peggy became life-long friends. When Peggy told her family she wanted to enter religious life they were proud and sad to think they would not see her often.

Entering was not easy for Margaret, and all her life she remained dedicated to her family. She entered in Los Angeles on September 8, 1965. She received the habit on August 6, 1966 and received the religious name Sister Margaret. Sister pronounced first vows on August 15, 1968, final vows on July 25 1974. In 2016 she celebrated her 50th Jubilee as a woman religious.

Peggy’s assignments led her to study, work and serve away from San Diego, for more than forty years. Sister Margaret completed her studies in Physical Therapy in 1972 and was assigned to St. Joseph Hospital in Tucson for four years. In 1978 she began preparation for graduate study in Hospital Administration. She was then missioned to Daniel Freeman Hospital in Los Angeles. Over the years she served in all five of the Los Angeles CSJ hospitals. As Director of Quality Care for the Optimist Youth House System in Los Angeles, she was especially effective and enjoyed the challenge.

Finally back in San Diego, Peggy jumped right back into family life. In 2007 she returned to San Diego, enjoying the opportunity to live near her family. She and grandnephew Tony adopted a Tibetan Spaniel named Dora. When there were no positions available in administration, she studied Clinical Pastoral Education for Hospital Chaplaincy. Dora, her dog, became her constant companion, helping in ministering to hospice patients. Margaret was also involved in caregiving of elderly adults in San Diego, working with Visiting Angels. Beyond her knowledge and broad background, was her own experience for 12 years with a rare blood disorder. This brought an element of empathy to Margaret’s ministry.

Peggy’s sister, Lynn, provided the following paragraph:

“Peggy’s family and friends consider her work in San Diego her greatest legacy. A perfect combination of her highly developed spirituality, hands on healthcare skill, and administrative expertise all created the perfect springboard for excellence in her last two careers. As hospice chaplain, for Vitas, Peggy thrived in providing comfort, empathy, spirituality, companionship,

prayer, song, humor and procedural expertise at end of life care. While serving as a homecare provider for Visiting Angels, clients often expressed their gratitude in having a trusted Catholic nun, resourceful and kind, to help them during their difficult and often lonely times.”

Family members shared that Peggy was competitive in school and at family gatherings, especially in card games. She enjoyed humor, looking at the world with amused eyes. Prior to a meal, she would always end the blessing with, “And thank you to the animals!” laughing as everyone lost their appetite. At the end of each prayer, she would say emphatically, “A-Men, and Women!”

For over five years, Margaret allowed the Saint Joseph workers to use her apartment over night before they went to build a house in Tijuana. She thoughtfully provided breakfast bread, had the house ready for guests. Generosity was her gift to these young women by sharing her living space.

Around the time Covid19 began, Margaret’s struggle with dementia became more apparent. Her sisters provided loving care, support and even protection from entering group living, until it became necessary for a change. Peggy enjoyed the experience of Oakmont Senior Living Residence in Pacific Beach and the many opportunities they provided for maintaining independence and supporting her dementia needs. There CSJ’s and family visited with regularity.

After some unfortunate decline that required a higher level of care, her family requested she relocate to St. John of God Center and be among her sisters in community. Peggy transferred to St. John of God Center in Los Angeles on December 12th. Sadly she was there for only a few days, before her journey quietly ended at the age of 75 on December 15th with CSJ sisters at her bedside.

Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ and Lynn Murray, Sister Margaret’s sister.