



Sister Mary Veronica Brutosky, CSJ

Sister Stephen Joseph, CSJ

April 27, 1932 - January 21, 2023

Like her father, Stephen Joseph, Mary Veronica was born in Connellsville, Pennsylvania. Her mother, Mary Elizabeth Takes was born in Hungary. In 1944, Veronica and the family moved to Fresno California. It was at St. Therese Elementary School Veronica first met the Sisters of St. Joseph in the seventh and eighth grades. She recalled Sister Mary Helena as helpful in realizing her vocation to religious life. After confirmation the bishop invited those who wished to give their lives to God in religious life to stand up in the church. Veronica stood, much to the surprise of her family. Mary Veronica was the oldest child of six, Stephen, Jean, Theresa, Mary and Michael.

In junior high school, Veronica earned piano lessons by working in the St. Therese convent kitchen after school. She persevered in her goal of becoming a religious during her high school years at San Joaquin Catholic Memorial High School. After working during the summer drawing maps for the telephone company, she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in Los Angeles on September 15, 1950. Her formation years went by quickly. On March 19, 1951, she received the habit and religious name of Sister Stephen Joseph, in honor of her father. First vows followed on March 18, 1953, and final vows on August 15, 1958. Sister gratefully celebrated her 70th Jubilee in 2021, by Zoom due to the Covid pandemic. In 1968 she chose to return to her baptismal name of Veronica, instead of Sister Stephen Joseph.

Sister Veronica received her Bachelor's Degree from Mount St. Mary's College in 1959, and then her Elementary and Secondary Life Teaching Credentials, later earning a Community College Credential.

She once said, "I began sketching at the age of four on the margins of my mother's cookbooks. My creativity was encouraged by teachers in Connellsville, Pennsylvania. I was self-taught until I attended what is now Otis-Parsons in Los Angeles where I earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1975."

In preparation for a Master's Degree, Sister stretched money for a ten-day trip to Europe into a ten week adventure. Traveling alone, she stayed in convents, slept on overnight trains, and managed to visit 11 countries, took in countless galleries and museums. "I wanted to see the real art in Europe before I studied it," she said. In 1984 she was awarded a Master's Degree in painting from Fresno State University. Veronica worked in a variety of mediums, including watercolor, oil, acrylic, wood block, pencil, linoleum cut, ceramics and calligraphy.

She was very proud of her artistic endeavors. Veronica had several selected exhibits and group shows to her credit. Among the more notable was the 1984 Los Angeles Artists' Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America Exhibit. One honor she especially appreciated was when USC chose her works to be featured at eight museums and galleries during the 1984 Olympics. Her work was chosen out of 15,000 entries in International Competition. Her credits included painting a 24-by-10 foot mural in a ministry center in Anaheim; designing a series of scriptural greeting cards for Printery House, as well as displaying her work in exhibits and group shows in Chicago, St. Louis, Wisconsin, Dallas and Los Angeles.

In 1996, she had a six-month one-woman show at the American Bible Society Gallery in New York. St Meinrad Abbey Studios chose her as resident sculptress out of a field of 40 artists. In 1972 she served as a co-judge with actor Vincent Price of Childrens' Art for CBS TV. Veronica served as curator and installation director for a group show of religious men and women's art in conjunction with the Leadership Conference of Women and Men Religious Superiors in San Francisco. She was also a published poet and author. Sign magazine in November 1960 published her short story, "The Runaway."

Sister taught in elementary schools for ten years, and in high schools for seventeen years in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego. She taught children's choirs, piano, wrote and directed school plays. Her first nationally published short story was about her father, Steven Joseph. For a total of twenty-four years she taught at Fresno City College and at California State University at Fresno. At Cal State she ministered as art education supervisor for student art teachers in Fresno Public Schools. Altogether she was a teacher for fifty-five years.

Veronica was involved in several ministries over the years. At various times in addition to her teaching and art work, she was a caregiver, coordinator of Fresno CSJ pre-Associates, was involved in True Life Ministry, and prison ministry. She was the originator and director of the International Registry for Religious-Women-Artists, beginning in 1978. She considered this to be a ministry to fellow artists who may have felt discouraged. She spoke of her gratitude to the CSJ Community for allowing her to express herself in so many creative endeavors.

Sister Veronica enjoyed travel, and was able to attend an eighteen-day retreat in Australia, at another time she visited for two weeks in Hawaii. She benefitted from several tours. In 1985 Veronica took a twenty-three day tour of Europe and a seven day cruise of the Greek Isles. In the summer of 1989, she took the seventeen-day Artist's Dream Tour, including Rhine River Cruise, Danube Cruise, with specially selected art sites, including Budapest, Hungary and Venice, Italy. Later she developed a series of twenty-five hour long art lectures related to the 1985 and 1989 tours.

Failing health caused Sister Veronica to become a member of the Holy Family Community in 2012. In the process of leaving her apartment, she had to find places for her many paintings and the art supplies she had accumulated. The move to Carondelet Center was not an easy one for her. However, once she became accustomed to the Center, she realized she could still drive herself to visit family and even made trips to Oregon and Wyoming. She continued her prison visits to Ed Contraras, and attended the Tridentine Sunday Mass at Queen of Angels Catholic Church, as she was able.

On November 17, 2021 Sister's health worsened and she moved to St. John of God Center for more intensive care. She continued her ministry to Edward Contraras, and attended mass as she was able.

We thank you, Veronica, for using your gifts for the empowerment of others; teaching, creating beauty, ministering to the imprisoned. May your journey now bring you home to God, the Source of all love and beauty.

~ Written by Sister Frances Baker, CSJ