



Sister Margaret Mary Murray, CSJ

December 30, 1939 – July 18, 2023

Sister Margaret Mary Murray, was born on December 30, 1939, in the town of Portumna, County Galway, Ireland. She was the youngest of John and Winifred Murray's ten children. For the rest of her life, Margaret's family and Portumna remained touchstones for her.

When Margaret was a year old, her mother Winifred died and Aunt Sarah and Uncle Michael took baby Margaret into their home. She lived with them and their daughter Cepta for the next fifteen years. Because her aunt and uncle lived not far from her family's home, Margaret was able to have frequent contact with her siblings during her early years.

Two years after her mother's death, Margaret's father died. The children stayed in the Murray family home, with five attending boarding school. During the coming years, many people supported the Murray children – aunts and uncles, neighbors, the local priests and Sisters of Mercy.

Margaret attended the local school staffed by Sisters of Mercy. She was happy at school. She was a good student and developed a circle of friends there. From an early age she began to think about becoming a Sister, and by the age of sixteen she was talking about her desire to enter the convent. By that time, the oldest of the Murray siblings, Father Sean, was a parish priest in San Diego, and he invited his sister to come to California and spend some time reflecting on her intention to enter the convent. So she undertook the journey to America, settled in San Diego and completed the senior year of high school at Our Lady of Peace Academy. Her brother encouraged her to consider joining the Sisters of St. Joseph of

Carondelet whom he knew from his parish and he liked their spirit. His recommendation led to Margaret's entering the Postulate in Los Angeles in September 1956.

Margaret's years in formation followed a typical pattern: She entered the Novitiate in March 1957, made her First Profession two years later in March 1959 and her Final Profession in 1964. Her first two years of teaching were at St. Jane Frances elementary school on North Hollywood. However, the sister who oversaw the education of sisters recognized Margaret's interest in literature and her ability to write, so she was sent to UCLA to earn a Master's Degree in English Literature, and the rest of her teaching career was spent in high schools – St. Mary's Academy in Los Angeles, Carondelet High School in Concord, Santa Clara High School in Oxnard, and Our Lady Queen of Angels high school seminary in San Fernando. Throughout those 18 years of classroom teaching, Margaret's inherent interest in and concern for others deepened, as did her own interior life, and over time her ministries shifted away from classroom teaching and toward pastoral ministry. For six years she served as Director of Candidates for the Province, during which she listened carefully to the experiences of young women interested in religious life and helped them learn how to hear God's voice. Beginning in 1985, for nineteen years she ministered at Holy Trinity parish in San Pedro, serving in various aspects of pastoral ministry and as a spiritual companion. Some of the friendships that were formed during those years continued through the rest of Margaret's life. When she was called in 2001 by the CSJ community to serve as a Regional Superior, she continued to deepen her understanding of spiritual development and the practice of spiritual direction through study and reflection, which in turn made her a better listener and advisor for the sisters in her region. After her service as a Regional Superior was completed in 2007, for the rest of Margaret's life she was fully engaged in the ministry of spiritual direction. There are many people who know God better today because they were accompanied on their journey by Margaret.

When someone dies, we ask ourselves, "What was the gift that this person brought into the world? Why do we mourn her passing?" Some of the qualities mentioned by her family and friends help us to see more clearly what Sr. Margaret Murray brought into the world and leaves behind with us.

*Her authenticity:* Jesus' words about Nathanael, "Behold the one in whom there is no guile" (Jn. 1:47), describe Margaret well. She knew when to speak and when to be quiet. When she shared her thoughts and feelings, she didn't try to imitate anyone else but instead expressed what was true for her.

*Her sense of humor:* Some family members have described Margaret's sense of humor as "sweet," "lovely," and "playful." Her friends know that Margaret enjoyed a well-told humorous story, or a cartoon or image with a joke hidden inside. She had a delightful laugh.

*Her readiness to listen:* In any conversation, Margaret didn't have to speak first, she didn't interrupt, and she often remembered what someone had said and could return to that topic later. She had a deep confidence in everyone's fundamental goodness, and when she listened to anyone, she could hear the Spirit of God speaking from the heart of that person.

*Her abiding faith in God:* Margaret faced some challenges in her life, particularly regarding her health. She was able to endure those challenges because she held on to the faith she had received during childhood from her family and the Sisters of Mercy, a faith which deepened through all her years of spiritual growth.

*Her generosity:* Margaret shared her time and talents with an open heart. She often volunteered to take notes for a meeting, or to compose a letter on behalf of a group. She was generous with her time and attention. A moving example of Margaret's generosity was her response to her brother Father Sean toward the end of his life, as he lost his hearing and his health gradually diminished. She regularly drove from Los Angeles to San Diego to spend time with him, do things for him, and offer loving companionship. She considered it a privilege, especially in light of his years of generosity to her when she first came from Ireland to San Diego and during all the years when they both lived in California.

Two months ago, in the middle of July, Sr. Margaret's life ended quietly. She was in San Francisco with friends, and while exiting the parish church, she fell – and that fall marked the beginning of her final journey. She moved to St. John of God Care Center, spent some time in the hospital, and returned to St. John's near the end of her life. As the strength of her heart and lungs diminished, she was less able to speak. In her final days she laid quietly in the bed. Early in the morning of July 18, Margaret passed from this life into fullness of life with God.

Those of us who loved Margaret live in hope. We hope to be reunited with her in the next life. We hope to imitate her virtues, the precious gifts she brought into our world and leaves with us – abiding faith, authenticity, kindness and a listening heart, and generosity.

May she rest in peace.