



*Sister Louise McDonald, csj*  
March 18, 1941 – March 19, 2024

Born in Los Angeles, Elizabeth Louise joined her loving parents, George W. McDonald, and Eileen E. Haley as their first born child. They provided a Catholic education for Elizabeth and her four brothers, George, Patrick, Richard, and Michael. Sister Louise was introduced to the CSJ Community while attending first grade at St. John the Evangelist in Hyde Park. At the age of nine her family moved to Encino, where the children attended Our Lady of Grace School for three years. Due to her father's promotion to operator of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Electric Plant, the family moved to San Fernando. This placed them in St. Ferdinand School and later Alemany High School.

In her own words, Louise recalled, "St. Ferdinand's was the center of our lives. Dad was a Knight of Columbus. He sang in the choir and wrote songs. At his funeral the choir sang one of his songs. Mom was a Catholic Daughter. I was a Junior Catholic Daughter. All my brothers were in Boy Scouts and were altar boys. I helped my mother clean the church and, later on, drove the Sisters on Saturdays to classes at the Mount."

She further recalled fun times with her brothers. They built a baseball diamond in the pasture behind their house. Together they collected frogs from the creek in front of their house. Their father taught each of them to shoot a rifle.

In high school, Louise had Sister Ernestine Munana as her junior homeroom teacher. "She was the one with whom I discussed God's call to religious life during retreat. She confirmed that I had a vocation. I never thought of any other congregation than ours, because I knew so many CSJs and they always seemed to enjoy each other's company. And also because they had hospitals and I wanted to be a medical technologist."

When Louise told her mother of her decision, her mother responded that she had prayed for this from before Louise was born. She had promised God that if He sent her a child, she would

give that child back to Him. Her mother never shared this with Louise until the day when Louise shared about wanting to enter.

On September 15, 1959 Louise entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in Los Angeles. She received the habit on March 19, 1960, and was given the name Sister John Louise. First vows followed in March, 1962. In 1968 she chose to be called Sister Louise. In 2020 Sister Louise celebrated her 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee as a Sister of St. Joseph.

While in formation and after, Louise continued her education. She earned a BA from the Mount. From 1974 to 1977 she studied Respiratory Therapy and Cardiopulmonary Technology in Spokane, and passed the National Board exam. She received an Education Certificate from San Diego State University in 1983. In 1995 she was awarded an MSW from the University of Washington, in Seattle.

Her first mission in 1964 was to teach fourth grade and serve as the principal of the CCD class at St. Patrick's School in San Diego. The PSA flight down was her first ever plane ride. Dreams of ministering in health care had changed when Mother Josephine said, "I need teachers and you will teach."

Over the years, Sister embraced various ministries. After five years in elementary education, she realized her dream to be in health care and served at St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston. Later she travelled to Tucson where she ministered as a Respiratory Therapist and the first CSJ to be missioned to Holy Cross Hospital in Nogales, Arizona. Being missioned to Nogales developed her growing desire to be in more direct ministry with the economically poor. This "Third World" experience propelled her into the Sanctuary Movement, and strengthened her resolve to work for structural change and further the kingdom of justice, love and peace. After a few years in parish ministry in San Diego, Sister returned to the Pacific Northwest where she served as a hospital chaplain and received her MSW degree in Seattle. For twelve years she was a medical social worker in hospice care.

Sister Louise's concern for justice and peace issues grew stronger over the years. Eventually she had membership in several organizations. In 1983 she co-founded the Interfaith Task Force on Central America, served on the steering Committee of the National Association of Social Workers, ministered as a volunteer organizer on the Washington Association of Churches. She was a Board Member of the San Fernando Valley Interfaith Alliance, Snoqualmie Falls Preservation Committee, Vice-President of Tucson Sister's Council, Delegate to Washington State Democratic Party Convention, NETWORK Spokane – Regional Coordinator, and NETWORK Tucson – State Coordinator.

Reading the mission magazine Maryknoll in the sixth grade, she realized a deep desire in her heart to "turn beyond herself to serve a world in need" as a missionary. However, lifelong health problems prevented her from living in a foreign country. Through her ministry in

Nogales, Arizona and later in San Diego, she realized she did not have to leave the United States to be a missionary. She discovered each ministry has within it the element of mission.

The sudden death of her father was difficult for Louise. She was always very close to him. However, the loss of Sister Clare Dunn and Sister Judith Lovchik was especially traumatic. She stated, "Tucson will always be holy ground for me because of all the sisters who were pioneers there, especially Clare and Judith."

In summary of her life, Louise wrote, "Throughout my religious life I have been sustained by my faith and faith-sharing experiences, and by friendships. Local community living has been both challenging and rewarding. I could not have even begun to be faithful without the support and loving confrontation of my sisters in community. I wish to be remembered as an ordinary CSJ who tried to be faithful to God's call in my life – to living the charism of unity and reconciliation."

Louise, may you rest now in peace.

~ Sister Frances Baker, CSJ