



Sister Marie Bernadette Walsh, CSJ

April 22, 1925 ~ June 6, 2024

James Paul Walsh (born in Duquesne, Pennsylvania) and Mary Cecelia Reich (born in Oakmont/ Franklin, Pennsylvania) were married in Denver, Colorado. They moved to Midwest, Wyoming where James had a job there in the oil fields. It was there that they had their first child who they named Mary Cecelia. She was born in a one-bed hospital that was used for the men if they got injured. As the nurse handed the newborn baby to her Mother, she commented that she was pudgy. Her Dad picked up on it and that became the name her family knew her by for the rest of her life. To others, she was Mary. The family moved from there to Tucson, Arizona where their second daughter, Patricia, was born. An army buddy of James told him about a job in Los Angeles so the family packed up and moved there where their family was completed with the births of Margaret (Peg) and Jim. After being in St. Michael's parish for a while, they moved to St. John's in Hyde Park which remained the family home for the next 44 years.

Mary Cecelia began her education in a public school for 3 years. She then went to St. Michael's until the family moved to St. John's parish when she was in the fifth grade and met the Sisters of St. Joseph - with Sister Rachel Payne being her teacher. Before finishing her elementary school days, she had Sister William Flanagan who was her 8th grade teacher and who "had a lot to do with her entering the CSJ's" even if it was quite a few years later.

Money was tight during these depression years, so the three girls in the family all attended Catholic Girls High School where Mary graduated in 1942. Knowing the financial needs of the family, she then went to work at California Bank (now First Interstate) where she stayed for eight years until her brother had graduated from high school. She left the bank in 1950 and worked in Colorado Springs while living with relatives for a few months. She returned home in January of 1951 and entered the convent on February 11, 1951. She received the habit on August 15 in that year and made her first vows on August 15, 1953, and her final vows on August 15, 1958. Previous to her entering, her sister, Peg, had entered the convent a year after her own graduation, so she had gotten a head-start.

Having made her first vows in August of 1953, she was ready for her first assignment - teaching 65 4th graders at St. Jane Frances School in North Hollywood. It was only slightly different than working in a bank!

Because of her prior work experience, after 2 years of teaching she went to get her degree from UCLA to be prepared for future work in business offices. She graduated from there with a degree in Business

Administration in 1958. That future work quickly started with her having opportunities for internships in province-sponsored hospitals in Tucson, AZ, Inglewood, CA, Pasco, WA and Lewiston, Id.

While on her internship at St. Joseph's Hospital in Lewiston, she had an opportunity to visit the mission school in Slickpoo which was operated by our Sisters. There was snow all around and the children there knew how to make and throw snowballs! It became one of her learning experiences in the northwest.

Following the internships, she then had one year at St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson in charge of the Business Office. Then she went to Daniel Freeman Hospital for seven years before being assigned to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Pasco for three years, where she also served as the superior.

From 1971-80 she was missioned to Mount St. Mary's College in charge of the Business Office and then moved down the hill to Carondelet Center where she worked in the Province Finance Office for a decade. During this time at the Center, she also served for part of that time as the superior for St. Mary's Community. In 1991, she was missioned to St. Mary's Academy where she worked in the finance office there until she got hit with cancer in 1994 and moved back to Carondelet Center as she underwent surgery, chemo and follow up treatment which left her without an effective immune system thereby creating lots of challenges.

During much of the above, there was a side ministry that went on for close to 40 years - it was definitely a ministry of love. When her brother Jim's wife died, their children were 1, 3 and 5 years old. She asked if she could help with their Christmas activities - wrapping presents, decorating the tree, baking cookies, etc. It was no surprise that Jim welcomed her offer and she loved the opportunity to be with the family as the children grew into adulthood and beyond! Christmas was her favorite season for many reasons!

As she responded quickly and generously to a family situation, she also continued to contribute her time and talents at the Center in spite of her own health challenges. She worked part time in the Archives for 18 years which she found to be a wonderful experience. She only quit doing that when macular degeneration caught up with her and she was concerned that she might make mistakes. For at least 15 years, she distributed mail at the Center and also made sure that the doors were checked every night to keep everyone safe. She was always thoughtful and helped wherever she could.

She enjoyed gardening, and those living at the Center were blessed with watching the sweet peas arrive every year for 40 years. She and Sister Catherine Irene worked diligently in setting up a rose garden outside the south wing. This was before there was a fence around that whole area and the deer definitely enjoyed munching away on the roses.

Sister also had other hobbies that kept her busy over the years. She made candles which were delightful gifts. She crocheted hundreds of booties and baby sets along with making many afghans for family members and boutiques. She enjoyed all of these activities and more!

She had the opportunity to go for a six week drive to Boston and back with Sister Thomas Bernard. They made retreat in New York and had the opportunity to visit both the Albany and St. Louis provinces. She also had the opportunity to be Sister Patricia Supple's companion to Hawaii. This was unexpected but was a dream come true as they had 10 days to see many sights, including Pearl Harbor and visiting Molokai.

Sister Marie Bernadette definitely enjoyed her family and her Godchildren. Along with loving her siblings, she loved her nieces and nephews and their children as well. She also had a particular love and wonderful

relationships with her Godchildren: Wanda Maria Brann, Joe Smith (nephew), Alan Reynolds, Barbara Sirignano and Jeannette Sirignano. Each of her family members and Godchildren had a special place in her heart.

While having spent much of her life in the accounting, finance and business world, Sister Marie Bernadette was a friend to many. She was often behind the scenes in many situations and always willing to assist others. She was an enabler and a great support person. Those 4th grade students got her off to a good start. And, all those who worked with her in the finance/accounting world appreciated her knowledge and experience as well as her graciousness, generosity and her friendship.

With changes at Carondelet Center during the last couple of years, the time for Sister Marie Bernadette to move to St. John of God Care Center arrived. While being quite content at the Center where she had continued to be a source of all kinds of information and support to the sisters and the staff, she accepted her move to a new home where she could continue her interest in the residents and staff along with keeping in touch with friends and family. She also continued her daily phone visit with Sister Anita Joseph, only - during their last call - she failed to mention that she would be going home to God during the night. She was the first of the children in her family to arrive and the last to leave. Although the length of time that she was the oldest Sister in the Los Angeles Province was short, she enjoyed the position.

Thank you Pudgy... Mary Cecelia... Sister Marie Bernadette... for being such a gift to so many of the "dear neighbors" you have encountered during your 99 years. We are grateful for your presence in our lives. May you now rest in peace.

~ Sister Pat Rosholt, CSJ