

EULOGY FOR SISTER MARY JENSCH

We start with a direct quote from Mary herself describing her arrival in this world:

“Mary Elizabeth was born in San Francisco on February 28, 1928. She was three years old when she walked into the home of Gertrude and Raymond Jensch, into a new world of love and devotion. Peggy, a Boston bull terrier, greeted her, her first dog in a succession of canine friends to be. This new tightly-knit family lived in Saint John’s Parish, Hyde Park, San Fernando Valley.” (end quote)

Mary’s loving parents imbued their daughter with their vibrant Catholic faith and strong family values. She was a deeply cherished child and was nurtured tenderly by her American father and English mother. Mary learned early on to appreciate cultural differences – a stepping stone to her later multi- cultural life involvements.

Mary’s education from her early days through graduation from Mount Saint Mary’s College was at schools conducted by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondolet. She dearly loved those Sisters and maintained her friendship with them throughout her life. Loyalty was always one of her strong virtues whether to her family, the CSJ’s or her own DMJ Community. She had numerous relatives and kept in contact with them through the years. Some of them are with us here today. She certainly mastered the art of ‘keeping in touch’. You should see her address book!

In 1950 Mary entered the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. With wholehearted generosity she dedicated herself to the service of God and the Church. She enriched our community with her many gifts; deep faith, enthusiasm, joy, humor, compassion, and her many professional skills. During her formation years she deepened her spiritual life and conscientiously dedicated herself to prayer – a pattern that grew steadily and sustained her through the years.

After her Profession she embarked on her life-long career of Christian education with vitality and great enthusiasm. Education was her first and

constant commitment. After a few years in primary schools she was assigned to Pius X High School in Downey. Here Mary truly found her niche and dearly loved her teenage students. Several of her former students from the various schools in which she taught are with us today. Four of them are members of our DMJ Community.

In 1967 the DMJ's opened Saint Joseph's High School in Santa Maria in conjunction with our Brother Community, the Josephite Fathers. Mary was one of the pioneers. She served as teacher and vice-Principal and left a lasting legacy of achievement and friendship. In the meantime she pursued her own professional studies and gained a degree in educational counseling.

Her next assignment was Saint Bernard High School in Playa del Rey where she served as both teacher and student- counselor. In this latter role she helped numerous students develop life-skills as she prepared them for college. However it was her personal interaction with and interest in each student that truly influenced their lives and left lasting memories.

In the early 70's Mary was called back to Community to assume the role of Provincial leadership. This was a challenging period in religious life. In the wake of the Second Vatican Council religious women received a unique call to conversion and renewal. At the same time a number of Sisters were questioning their vocations and some were leaving to pursue other lifestyles. It was a highly-charged emotional and turbulent time for all of us. However, guided by the Holy Spirit and with our Community's cooperation and resilience Mary steered us through those difficult years.

During the 70's she developed another passion – a passion for social justice and gave herself generously to it. She visited Delano several times to support Caesar Chavez and the Farm Workers. Over the years she championed various justice causes and participated in marches and meetings to obtain fair working conditions and fair wages. She responded to e-mails concerned with political and social issues.

Mary loved and supported our African Sisters and their missions and even made a trip to Uganda – a highlight of her life. She has left a very

descriptive journal of her trip in which one can sense Mary's zeal for the Mission of Christ as it is being lived in Uganda.

In the past several years she has been part of an Interfaith community in Culver City. This past September she was very united spiritually as two DMJs made a pilgrimage with the Interfaith Community to Mt. Baldy to pray for world peace. The day before she died she drove herself to Culver City to attend their monthly meeting. When she came home she produced a flier for a conference at LMU, March 8th. on WATER and the CA Drought and strongly encouraged the sisters to attend.

Following her term of community leadership Mary returned to Saint Bernard's where she resumed her cherished role of teacher and student counselor. She commuted from Palos Verde where her parents were living out their final years at La Casita. This was a challenging time for Mary, the long commute, caring for her parents and counseling her students. After her parents deaths she moved to Playa del Rey to be closer to the school.

In 2008 Mary came to live in Marian Residence. She said she was retiring but none of us took that seriously. These later years did give her time to enjoy her pet dogs, Phoebe and Derby. She also cultivated an organic garden and kept us supplied with tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, squash, rhubarb and even pumpkins. Recently she was delighted to get a new composter.

And finally during these last two years Mary responded to a call to a new ministry, teaching ESL to women at Presentation Learning Center in Watts. With a bounce in her step, she headed off every Monday morning – truly a 'grand finale' to her life's call.

Mary was in many ways larger than life. Her sudden death two weeks ago sent shock waves throughout her close-knit family of cousins, and local and International DMJ Community. But Mary was never one to loiter. How fitting it was then that our merciful God saw fit to transition her swiftly from a life fully lived to the fullness of eternal life. We love you, Mary. We will miss you. May you rest in peace.