

EULOGY FOR SISTER LOUIS MARIE HANRAHAN

It was the Best of Times in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. It was the Fabulous Fifties. The Catholic Church was alive and active. New churches and parishes were being built; new schools were being opened. And we, the Daughters of Mary and Joseph were in line for schools where our Sisters were eager to spread the Word of God as teachers.

It was into this exuberance that Sister Louis Marie, newly professed and straight from Ireland, joined us in 1954.

Over the next 26 years in DMJ schools in Los Angeles Archdiocese, - Our Lady of Peace, Sepulveda; St. Paul the Apostle, Westwood; St. Augustine's, Culver City where she was principal, and St. Joseph's High School, Santa Maria, Sr. Louis opened the hearts and sometimes reluctant minds of a host of students to the love of learning and the love of God. Some of her students have kept in touch with her throughout these 70+ years.

Then in 1981, a call to serve as a missionary in Cameroon, North Africa, touched Sr. Louis' heart and off she went. Giving herself totally and unselfishly to this mission, Louis soon became one with the people. Tributes in her honor have been pouring in from Cameroon. There will be more about this in a few moments.

After 26 years in Cameroon, Sister returned to California where she immediately explored volunteer opportunities to serve the poor. Since she didn't drive, a friend showed her the bus routes on the Westside with a view to helping at St. Joseph's Center in Venice. Eventually Sr. Pauline, DMJ, introduced her to Carol's Kitchen in Banning which turned out to be a very significant ministry for her and the people of Banning and Beaumont. Working alongside an outstanding group of volunteers and serving the poor, invigorated her spirit and she forged lasting friendships which continue to this day.

In 2014, Sr. Louis retired to Marian Residence in Rancho Palos Verdes, where she remained an active and prayerful member of her religious community. With the encouragement of her Sisters at Marian, Louis, shared many stories of her experiences in her ministries, keeping alive her memories and love of all those she kept so dearly in her heart and prayer.

One of the many tributes we have received in Louis' honor comes from one of our DMJ Sisters, Rosemary Kamahoro, who lives in Uganda and had lived many years with Louis in Cameroun. Rosemary's words capture the spirit of Louis' missionary heart:

EMMAUS COMMUNITY
MBARARA
24th October 2025

Dear Louis Marie,
I do remember you!



I want to thank God who created you. I was so happy to find you in North Cameroun. Whenever I came from Meme to Mayo Ouldeme, you used to take me to see the neighbours and in your 'office' the Bibliothèque for the pupils of Mayo Ouldeme trying to learn to read and write. I remember when we climbed the mountains going to one of the Christian communities for mass. There was no path but you had found the path and were ahead of us urging us to hurry and be there before le Père Roger gets there before us. In my heart I wondered how you were climbing those huge rocks as I struggled to find where to put a foot. After the celebration of mass, there was a refreshment of Bil bil a local brew and as a lover of simplicity and humility you shared it and who would have refused it after you had joyfully taken it. Then there came a meal. I saw you sitting on a rock and enjoying the Gombo sauce so slipperly...which I came to love later. I was watching you with wonder you were like bible that I was reading. How you had become part of the people as if you were born there!!! Such memories bring tears in my eyes but tears of hope that you have finally found you home, the face of that God you longed for, worked for and served joyfully, the one who gave you that courage to climb the rocks in order to carry that love to the marginalized in the mountains of Cameroun. Since then you attracted me and when finally came to Meme community, I was more than joyful to watch you. I used to watch your friends who came to see you. Your type of friends touched me. Thank you for loving the simple and the poor people and for giving them joy. You were like their sister, they could share with you intimately and they never forgot you. You changed their lives, you were a friend of the children, the women the men, the youth and encouraged them to live on joyfully despite this world's challenges. The smile you put on your face whenever they came, the type questions you asked: "How are your children, are they going to school? what about your wife, husband"...mentioning their names!! Your eyes penetrated a person's life as if they were taking a photo that remained printed in your heart because you were able to pronounce their names. I remember when we used to face " la chaleure together in the compound of Meme at night. You found a good spot on the raised flat concrete where we used to wash and dry plates. That would be you bed in the night for some fresh air at night. As soon as you lay there, it took no time and you snoring after a heavy day's work. I felt good because you were enjoying your sleep in the open air under the stars. I remember how you taught me to fix my bed with bricks under a Neem Tree. It became a comfortable bed for those nights outside. Your dwelling was cool since it was grass thatched little hut and we were sure St. Patrick kept the snakes away. You had no snake bite all your time there, thanks to St Patrick's card that hung at our entrance door.

Do you remember when It was our turn to prepare lunch for Fr. Frans... and how we struggled to clean the tongue of the cow that was on our menu. We had just returned from mass in the out station. We were hurrying to have it peeled and cooked because we knew that as soon as it strikes 1.00 pm, Frans would be there!!! Haa we had great laughs and we barely finished the peeling, cleaning and cooking the tongue. The potatoes boiled fast in their jackets and sure enough Frans was at the door saying in his loud voice 'vous êtes là? We panicked but burst laughing because we were not yet ready. I ran to open for him and we had lunch. When he had gone, we had fun! We never forgot the 'tongue' and it became a source of laughter.

Then came a time when Jen (RIP) got ill and passed on. You were so courageous and stayed with us in pain and prayer at her send off. That was hard but we carried it in our hearts painfully but with hope in the Eternal One. When you left Cameroun you took all the people in your heart. I remember our chat on the phone after I had returned from our second visit to the North 2years ago, you could mention the names of the people that you had met more than 20 years ago and the memories were so fresh in your heart!!! I was so happy to meet you again when I came to California to do Mission appeals. We had our memories refreshed of Cameroun. I again watched you. In Banning I saw how you walked fast to feed the homeless. We had our private laughs too...those homeless people who would ask you "what is on the menu?" You would whisper to me and we would laugh... You are a gentle soul Marie!!! You are a special wrapped gift that God unwrapped gently for our congregation and for the people to share.

Marie as people called you in the North of Cameroun, Go gently on that smooth road to Heaven. You are in a better place in the hands of that God who loved you most, You behold the face of the Eternal One. Your face is gone from our eyes but your name remains in our hearts. After you have taken your place in heaven, remember those faces you met, especially Mariam, Blama Jean Baptiste, these never stopped asking about you!!! And many others you interacted with and helped to live another day, and intercede for us. I will not see you again to share our memories, neither on the phone, but now I see you happy, simple, courageous with your big hat on the head and sandals on your feet, with your Kaba Kitenge dress under the hot sun, bearing a big Heart full of Love, Joy and hope as gifts to the people. I will not cry again for you. I will always cherish those moments of laughter that we shared and keep you in my heart till we meet again.

Bye dear gentle Soul, Rest in Peace Louis Marie.
May the Angels lead you into Paradise and welcome you home.
Rosemary.

