

SR MARY JOSEPH R.I.P.

Sr Mary Joseph was born Jeanne Bangerter on 14th March 1925 in London. She first encountered the DMJs as a pupil at Coloma Convent Grammar School in Tavistock Rd.

Her Father was Swiss and anxious that his daughter should become a fluent French speaker, he sent her to Switzerland for a long vacation. Unfortunately war broke out just as she was due to return to England and she was fortunate to complete the journey home unscathed.

During the war she began her degree at London University and achieved a B.A Honours in French in 1946. She completed her teaching diploma the following year.

She answered the call to religious life in 1950 and made her first vows on 21st April 1953 and final vows 5 years later on 16th April

Her subsequent teaching career included 12 years at Merrow Grange and then at St Peter's as Head of Lower School from 1971-85. Much against her inclination she was appointed Headmistress at St Anne's College Sanderstead from 1959-1963.

Following a sabbatical in Rome at Regina Mundi from 1963-64, she agreed to lecture in Mathematics at the Coloma Training College for one year. After that, she was delighted to return to Merrow teaching French, Maths and Physics from 1965-71.

Such was the shortage of Physics teachers, that Mary Jo went to the local technical College in Guilford to study O level Physics herself so that she could teach the students at Merrow Grange. Mary Jo had a natural bent for scientific studies so it was really no hardship for her and she derived immense satisfaction from conquering new terrain.

That attitude typified her approach to life which was characterised by great zest for adventure and challenges. A naturally exuberant personality she was very popular with students. When Merrow amalgamated with St Peter's she enjoyed teaching in the co-ed environment. Having been brought up with three brothers, two of whom were twins, the male psyche was no mystery to her and she was a popular Head of Lower School at St Peter's from 1971-85.

On her retirement from teaching she served for a number of years as an extremely enthusiastic and able Administrator of St Anne's Court, the residential care Home at West Wickham run by the DMJs. It was here, while walking in the garden one day that she observed one of the residents sitting on a bench at the side of the disused and somewhat unsightly tennis court. Seeing all the weeds growing there, she felt the residents deserved something better to look at. At once, she set about planning a Rose Garden in which residents and visitors may still enjoy the beauty of the roses and the peaceful atmosphere to this day.

Mary Jo took full advantage of the sabbatical opportunities on offer; Regina Mundi in 1963 for one year; and a visit to the Holy Land during her 1985/6 sabbatical which included a 3 month renewal course at Hawkstone Hall. In 1991, much to her surprise, Mary Jo was asked to spend a year in Burundi, teaching the postulants and

novices English. Mary Jo applied herself to the task with her characteristic vigour. While her efforts were greatly appreciated, the opportunity to visit Africa gave Mary Jo a richer perspective of the work of the Congregation in Africa.

From the letters and telephone calls we have received , we know that "Mary Jo' " was loved and appreciated by pupils and colleagues alike. When people spoke of her who could not always recall her name they always said: 'You know who I mean: the one with the lovely smile.'

To the very end, Sisters, family, friends and those who cared for her were rewarded and thanked with that smile and always remarked on it.

Sadly, her latter years were burdened by ill health and she suffered a great deal of pain in her last illness. She died peacefully, in St Joseph's community on 13th December 2018, surrounded by her DMJ sisters.

May she rest in peace.

Mary Goretti & Felicé

St Joseph's Community

December 2018.



Sr Mary Joseph relaxing with Sr Mary Goretti's mother at her home.