

Sister Maureen Rooney, CSC

(Sister M. Francis)

December 9, 1939–February 3, 2021

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Joanne Bauer, CSC, who read them at the Mass of the Resurrection on February 11, 2021.

First and foremost, Sister Maureen Rooney was faith-filled and had a strong sense of God's call. Her parents did not want her to enter a religious community, but they did not stop her from doing so. When Maureen was 21, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Maureen was very caring, even thinking about those she might teach before she entered the novitiate. Prior to Holy Cross, she worked at the Teamsters Union and with Jimmy Hoffa for three years. She felt these experiences might be good teaching material for high school students. Maureen's caring ways spanned her 23-year teaching and administrative career in Catholic elementary schools through five states and into her work as an executive secretary in several archdioceses and dioceses.

She accepted the challenges as well as the graces she experienced in her life journey both realistically and practically: "It is what it is." Amidst her diminishment, she accepted her suffering with great faith. As a true daughter of Moreau, she believed wholeheartedly in Divine Providence.

Her faith, personality, character and actions revealed to others her sense of commitment. She was focused, goal oriented, curious and a prolific letter writer. She wrote postcards and letters to families and friends about her travels. She had a good

sense of humor and loved to play devil's advocate and get a rise out of people, but always with a twinkle in her eye.

Fresh hot coffee was an important order item at any restaurant, along with her carefully selected meal preferences. "Scotch Mellows" from See's Candy was a favorite.

Family was very important to Maureen.

The Depression and World War II required that Maureen's family move a lot during her early childhood. By the time Maureen started fifth grade at St. Bernard's grade school in Oakland, California, she had lived in five states. At St. Bernard's, Maureen met the McGee family: Sarah, now Sister Patrice, was in fourth grade, Agnes in third, Maureen in second, along with Patrick and Eileen. The McGee household was hospitality personified. Over many years people sought the friendliness and home-like atmosphere of the McGees' presence. When entering the McGee home, many felt a special "aura." Maureen was no exception. Over the years Maureen treasured her strong relationship with them. Maureen completed St. Elizabeth High School along with the McGees and lived in the Bay Area until she entered Holy Cross from St. Bernard's Convent in Oakland. In 1960, Sister Mary Mulligan, who was living and teaching at St. Bernard's, sewed the habits of Maureen and the other two who had entered from there.

Mrs. Rooney worked in the food industry and in later years as a waitress in Reno, Nevada. Maureen gained a high respect for those who worked in this busy and demanding occupation.

Maureen had relatives across the country and was especially close to her sister Pat, brother-in-law Vic, nephew Skip, Ardyce's daughter Elisa, and her family. Her aunt Margaret and six daughters were special people in her life.

Maureen left friends in every city where she had lived and worked. Over the years she kept connected with them through Plan A or Plan B. She didn't waste a minute of her vacation.

Maureen once sent her band a handwritten list of all 76 members who had entered in 1960. She kept in touch with present and former members and kept bandmates in touch with one another. Whenever and wherever the band gathered for Holy Cross meetings and events, Maureen took the lead to propose a time and place to gather for a social. Maureen was a trailblazer who lived on the cutting edge.

Having a rare blood type, she generously donated blood frequently. She wrote for permission to be cremated before it was a choice in Holy Cross.

A lover of mathematics, science and business, she was one of the first to learn about computers.

She applied and was selected to be on the first Moreau Pilgrimage in 1968.

In 2006, she attended the Moreau Spirituality Institute in France and accompanied a Holy Cross sister on a short, historical visit to Samos, Greece. There, the sisters knew no Greek and their cab driver knew no English. The directions to the small, remote village were good, but only for part of the way to where they were meeting a family of Greek friends. Suddenly Maureen remembered the German word for "church" that she had learned in her class at Saint Mary's. Hearing the word "church," the cab driver knew exactly where to go! All were delighted they had found their way—if only by "hanging on a word"!

With her love of history, Maureen attended many CSC retreats and history conferences and Women of Holy Cross meetings. She expressed her hope to the General Council that the

Congregation would “serve as Moreau had envisioned: all three branches working more closely together and more frequently and in more places.” Maureen added, “I could see myself being a part of that collaborative ministry.”

She applied for and received many National Science Foundation grants with opportunities to travel and study in different places with no community expense involved.

She attended many Los Angeles Religious Education Congresses over the years.

During the time of the 1994 Los Angeles riots, Maureen lived at Daniel Freeman Hospital. Her daily route passed by the spot where the riots began in response to the beating of Rodney King. She had barely driven by this spot when the riots began.

She left Daniel Freeman to join three other Holy Cross sisters to start St. Bernadette’s Convent in Los Angeles.

Maureen was an organizer par excellence. Bishop Stephen Blaire, auxiliary bishop for Cardinal Mahony in Our Lady of the Angels Pastoral Region, commented that one time when he left his office briefly and came back, Maureen had already filed the papers on his desk that he had been using.

An excellent seamstress, this entrepreneur was well known for her Barbie doll fashions that she created, sewed and sold for over 35 years with the proceeds going to the missions for our retired sisters’ care. She was always working on a project or hobby. Maureen was a Type A personality and loved her work.

Through the postulancy and two-year novitiate, both Maureen and Sister Mary Louise Full, CSC, worked for Mother M. Regina (Kavanaugh). (Note: The band members considered this somewhat of a “dream job” compared to their work. This has

been a cause for many laughs over the years.) Maureen revealed that she was “highly motivated and energized by challenges and a variety of work.” She described completing one year of a position in one diocese as “a vacation-type job” as it required no extra meetings, even though she worked very hard daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Prior to that, she had been a principal for seven years.)

Five of her most precious relationships were those with Holy Cross Sisters M. Honora (Scott), Maria Ave (Gorman) and Mary Mulligan, and Dolores Kanowsky (former Sister M. Martin) and Julie Cate (former Sister Ineen).

Since 2007, when Mary Mulligan and Maureen arrived at Saint Mary’s, Notre Dame, Indiana, their friendship has continued to be steadfast and strong. Of course, both had kept up their close relationship since their St. Bernard days in Oakland. Both had ministries at Saint Mary’s.

As Maureen’s illness progressed to the point where she could no longer work and became incapacitated, Sister Mary visited Maureen daily during this very long illness.

Maureen captured what mattered most to her in these words, “Holy Cross has been my family, and I’ve appreciated my call to serve within it.”

Maureen, I know you are watching us today. You have traveled into the very heart of God, greeted by your family and friends already there. May you rest in peace having realized your vision and goal.