

Sister M. Gerald Anne, CSC

(Mildred Johana Mahoney)

April 15, 1933 – February 27, 2024

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Suzanne Patterson, CSC, who recited them at Sister Gerald Anne's funeral on March 5, 2024.

As Sister Gerald Anne (Mahoney), CSC, wove the tapestry of her life, various persons contributed threads over the years. While those strands reflected the many aspects of her personality, the dominant color of Sister Gerald Anne's tapestry was, of course, Our Lady's blue. Sister Gerald Anne was very dedicated to the Blessed Mother. Sisters, friends, and those with whom she ministered contributed to the vibrancy and depth of color in her emerging tapestry.

Sister Gerald Anne boarded at St. Angela Academy in Morris, Illinois, where she and the sisters forged lifelong relationships. Sister M. Una (Garrity), CSC, instructed Winnie, as she preferred to be called, in the Catholic faith, and she was baptized at age 12. During high school, she began to consider religious life, and with Sister Una's encouragement, Winnie entered the Sisters of the Holy Cross after graduation and soon became Sister M. Gerald Anne. Sister M. Jane Chantal (Method), CSC, remembers that Sister Gerald Anne was always proud to wear the habit as a Sister of the Holy Cross and was grateful to be able to use her gifts in service to others.

Wherever Sister Gerald Anne was missioned, she brought her special gifts of consistency, order and direction. Whether she was working with fourth grade students at St. Stanislaus Catholic School in Modesto, California, or visiting with patients at St. Joseph Hospital in South Bend, Indiana, Sister Gerald Anne always gave full attention to the needs of those she served. She invited children and adults to deepen and strengthen their lives by her own strong faith and commitment to the needs of others.

Sister Patricia Riley, CSC, shared several stories of Sister Gerald Anne's days at St. Stanislaus school: Each day when the other classes left the playground, Sister Gerald Anne had her students stay for calisthenics. They did jumping jacks and toe touches to ready themselves for an afternoon of sitting with the books.

Sister Gerald Anne and her fourth grade students were service oriented, and they had a special project every week. On Thursday afternoons, the class marched down to the cafeteria kitchen and made 400 little cups of Jell-O. The Jell-O was sold at lunch the next day for a nickel, and the money went to missions.

Over the years, Sister Gerald Anne served in elementary education, nursing and physical therapy, and in pastoral ministry in hospitals and nursing homes. She developed a ministry of support to prisoners through letter writing. The scope of her outreach to others was amazing.

Sister Gerald Anne also had a deep love of music. She appreciated the opportunity to learn to play both the piano and the organ. Various sisters taught her at different times. Among them were Sister Mary Edith (Daley), CSC, at St. Angela Academy, Sister M. Vibiana (Weber), CSC, at Saint Catherine by the Sea in Ventura, California, and Sister M. Joan Elizabeth (Johnson), CSC, at Saint Mary's Convent, Notre Dame, Indiana.

When Sister Gerald Anne was transferred to Saint Catherine's, her interest in music was rekindled. She especially loved liturgical music. Her favorite hymn was "Panis Angelicus." Sister Vibiana taught Sister Gerald Anne the organ, so she began to play at community Masses. She also accompanied sisters during sing-alongs. Several sisters recall sitting outside enjoying the weather while listening to Sister Gerald Anne play the piano.

In her later years, Sister Gerald Anne continued to enjoy music, but no longer played the piano. Lisa Loughran, a staff nurse at Saint Mary's Convent, cherishes her memory of the day she and a care partner brought Sister Gerald Anne to the piano in the community room. They placed her hands on the piano keys so she could feel them. To their surprise and

pleasure, she began to play beautifully. This was a single event. The next time she was at the piano her fingers were still.

As archivist Madisen Toth recorded in Sister Gerald Anne's obituary, Dennis Heck, former president of St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, said that Sister Gerald Anne was someone who was "an example to all on living the mission of the organization." She had "a smile which brightens the darkest day," and was always willing to do more than what was asked without hesitation. This spirit of dedication well describes how Sister Gerald Anne approached any task.

Cathy Manes, staff nurse, and several care providers from Saint Mary's Convent recall touching experiences with Sister Gerald Anne: "When anyone entered her room, they would be greeted with a smile and a 'Hello, honey.' Even in her last years, it was a pleasure to see Sister look up and smile as you were conversing with her or giving care of some kind. She was definitely a bright light to many."

Susie Mack, a friend of Sister Gerald Anne, recalls how much her family enjoyed their visits to Saint Mary's Convent. She wrote:

"Our family met Sister Gerald Anne at Saint Mary's Convent in the mid-2000s. We were drawn to her joyful smile and sense of humor. Sister Gerald Anne and our son, Ryan, share a birthday, so we decided that the two of them must be cousins! From that point on, we kept in touch with her through cards, phone calls and visits. When we asked her what we could bring her, it was usually 'fuzzy blue slippers!' Of course, Sister Gerald Anne had large feet, so this was a challenge at times to find a good fit. She also was delighted with anything else we brought if the items were the color blue, her favorite.

As time went on and her health issues pursued, Sister Gerald Anne developed some memory issues. Sometimes she believed my husband Dave was her dad, and jokingly reminded him that, if he acted up, she would 'put his head in a bucket of cold water!' (Dave rarely 'acts up' except during a Notre Dame football game.)

We have been so blessed to have friendships with the Sisters of the Holy Cross and the amazing nursing staff. The visits may have been a nice diversion for the sisters and staff, but our family benefitted so much more, engaging in conversation as we shared a cookie or two with everyone. And, if we chatted too much with another sister, Sister Gerald Anne was sure to call us back to her side reminding us we were there to visit her! We miss you, Sister Gerald Anne!”

Indeed, we will all miss you, Sister Gerald Anne. Your memory will stay fresh in our hearts. We all feel privileged to have been a part of the tapestry of your life.