

Memento for Sister Mary Byrnes, CSC

November 14, 1926 - January 12, 2019

These memories were lovingly prepared by those who knew Sister Mary and shared their reflections. They were written by Sister Ann Therese Sinclair, CSC, and read by Sister M. Alberta (Zimmer), CSC, at the funeral on January 17, 2019.

Sister Mary Byrnes was born on November 14, 1926, in Logan, Utah, and entered the Sisters of the Holy Cross from Saint Mary of the Wasatch in Salt Lake City. She was one of 12 children of Michael and Violet Byrnes. Both parents had a special love of the Blessed Mother and of flowers. Among other things, her father was a beekeeper and a farmer who raised flowers. Mary's father and uncles carried the middle name of Mary. Their parents gave their daughters names that included the names of flowers: Mary's baptismal name was Violet Mary. Her sister, also a Holy Cross Sister, was Sister Viola Marie whose baptismal name was Marigold. Other sisters' names included Hyacinth and Rose. Mary's religious name was originally Sister Henry. When she was able, she returned to the simple name of Mary. This reflected her deep devotion to the Blessed Mother.

Mary grew up in a warm, loving household where her mother instilled in her children faith in good works, kindness to the sick, care of a household and her home remedies using nature's gifts of honey, vinegar, olive oil and vitamin therapy. Until her later years, Mary firmly believed in these remedies and resisted other medical interventions. Reluctantly she accepted other treatments.

Sister Mary had a rich ministry life beginning with early years of teaching in the primary grades. She seemed happiest in her later ancillary roles, where for a time she served as a compassionate companion to elders and staff at Madonna Manor, Salinas, California. Elsewhere, she enjoyed being a sacristan, housekeeper, infirmarian, driver, seamstress and office assistant.

Just an aside: Here at Saint Mary's, Sister Mary drove the large van and was able to manage the lift for the sisters in wheelchairs as well as any of our male drivers.

Sister Mary adapted her gifts and talents generously for many different needs. She was never without her love of gardening. While at Saint Catherine

by the Sea in Ventura, California, she raised African violets and roses and sold her sweet peas to a local florist. She won many ribbons at the state fair.

Her ministries reflect many of the qualities people shared about her. She was kind, had a good sense of humor, was a good listener and was always ready to lend a helping hand to whatever was needed. She had a deep and simple faith.

Mary was known to be gifted and generous with her hands-- sewing, painting and crocheting. She contributed many of her creations to bazaars and boutiques. To the delight of children, she had a special talent for creating intricate balloon animals.

Many of the ministries of her later life reflect the loving nurturing of these talents from her early years at home. She cherished family ties and was especially close to her brother, Joe, her remaining sibling who lives in San Jose, California, and is unable to be here. We had hoped to have her niece, Kathy Sharpe, here with us today.

We will miss your gentle presence and your beautiful smile, Sister Mary.

We know that, with your parents and many siblings, you are now enjoying the beauty and the scent of every flower you loved. May our Lady of Holy Cross welcome you into the loving arms of our God.