

Sister María (Colette) Hartman, CSA

Mary, Hermana María, Sister Colette, are the names that we called her. Her brightness shone like the afternoon sun, as it sets beyond the sea. In the sunset of her life, she scattered her light in the heavens like the full moon, cheering the hearts of those who beheld her. Her paintings, her flower arrangements and her art reflected her artistic and creative depth.

As a member of CSA, she always strove to be true to her commitment with the gospel of Jesus, dedicating her life to serving the poor, particularly in Nicaragua.

Mary was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, on July 31, 1928, and was baptized Annie Colette. Her parents were Jerome L. Hartman and Alice M. Feeney Hartman. She had three siblings: Charlotte M. (deceased), Elwood T. (deceased), and Dick Hartman.



María died peacefully in Nicaragua at the age of 91 on August 8, 2019.

Since the age of ten, Mary wanted to enter religious life. She loved and admired her teachers, who were Sisters of St. Agnes. Her parents agreed, but asked her to finish a university degree first. She completed her first year at the university but did not want to wait any longer and left for Fond du Lac to enter the community.

On August 15, 1950, Mary took her first vows. During her early years in the community, she taught elementary school. Studying during summer vacations, she completed an MA degree in English literature at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In September 1961, the Superior General sent out a letter seeking volunteers to go as missionaries to Nicaragua, where CSA had been present since 1945. María volunteered and was sent. She would later comment that the two things that touched her heart most deeply in Nicaragua were the people and the natural beauty. She felt that the people revealed a special charism of welcoming visitors and making them feel at home. The people shared much of their lives with her. She found that the lush natural beauty was almost dreamlike. This connection of love and admiration for Nicaragua and its people made Mary extend her initial pledge of five years of service into a 58-year commitment.

Mary worked very hard, struggling for justice and peace together with the people in the marginal communities. She survived two wars, an earthquake in Managua and many hardships arising from injustice and poverty. During her first 17 years in Nicaragua, she worked as an educator at the Niño Jesús School in Puerto Cabezas, and in Managua she

worked at the Central American University, in the Riguero neighborhood and in other locations. During the 1980s, she worked in the national office of human rights, where she contributed to improving processes in the national penitentiary system.

In 1988, together with Sister Anabel, she co-founded Cantera which is dedicated to contributing to the recognition, training and development of the poorest communities and persons. Mary always invited people from the United States who shared the same dreams of equality and justice to form part of Cantera's work. This was how the *Friends of Cantera* organization was formed in the United States. "Love transcends borders," she used to say.

During her life Mary was a manifestation of the God of Compassion and the God of Love. Today, she herself is also a part of God and today God is a part of Mary, Hermana Maria, Colette.