

## **Sister Jean Steffes, CSA**

Sister Jean Steffes, CSA, formerly Sister Louisa, died peacefully August 22, 2023, at Nazareth Center in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Jean Rose was born in Ada, Oklahoma, on November 14, 1943, the daughter of Louis Anthony Steffes and Vincentia Brenner Steffes. Jean's father, a cheesemaker working for Cudahy West Cheese Company, followed his company to different sites necessitating moves for his young family to Missouri, Oklahoma, and Nebraska. After serving in World War II, Louis moved his family to Dotyville, Wisconsin, where he became manager of a small cheese plant. He was about to be promoted and transferred to a plant in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, when he became ill and died of polio in 1949, leaving behind his wife and four young children. After Louis's death, the family lived for one year with Vincentia's mother on her farm in Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin. Jean attended first grade at Holy Cross School in Mt. Calvary. In the summer of 1950, Vincentia purchased a home in Fond du Lac for her family. Jean completed elementary education at St. Joseph Grade School in Fond du Lac and high school at St. Mary's Springs Academy, Fond du Lac, graduating in 1961. Jean then enrolled at Marian College majoring first in biology, but later transferring her major to English. While at Marian and engaged to be married, she was drawn to the life of her teachers, the Sisters of St. Agnes. Choosing to pursue a call to religious life, she broke off her engagement and entered St. Agnes Convent on September 8, 1964. She made her first profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes as Sister Louisa on August 15, 1967, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Sister Jean's educational pursuits included earning a BA in English from Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, in 1965; an MA in English in 1974 and an MA in Human Services and Counseling in 1981 from DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois; and an MA in Theology in 1997 from the University of San Francisco—Phoenix Campus.

Devoted to her CSA sisters and the mission of the congregation, Sister Jean was a gifted educator and beloved leader in her CSA congregation and for the Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, Arizona.

Sister Jean began her years in ministry as an English teacher at St. Mary's Springs High



School (1967-1969). From 1969-1977, she taught English and religion at Immaculate Conception High School, Elmhurst, Illinois. She returned to St. Mary's Springs (1977-1982) teaching English, working in the counseling department, and simultaneously serving as the novice director for the Sisters of St. Agnes. Her service to CSA as novice director (1977-1982) was the beginning of 25 years of courageous and visionary service in CSA leadership roles: novice director, regional coordinator for sisters living and ministering in New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Tennessee (1982-1985), and seventeen years as general superior for the congregation (1985-1993; 2013-2022).

In 1993, having completed two terms as general superior of CSA, Sister Jean began working for the Diocese of Phoenix. She served as Director of the Office for Religious and Director of the Office for the Propagation of the Faith. In 2004, she was appointed Chancellor of the Diocese, an administrative and supervisory role that included problem solving and decision making in collaboration with the bishop on behalf of the diocese.

She also served as a spiritual advisor and facilitator for local religious communities in the area. The diocesan staff deeply missed her when she was elected to a third term as CSA's general superior in 2013; however, they recognized the wisdom, keen ability for detail, and spirit of hospitality which Sister Jean would bring to her congregation in accepting the leadership role once again.

After completing her fourth term as CSA general superior in August 2022, a term extended an additional year during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sister Jean was looking forward to life after the responsibilities of congregational leadership. Those hopes were dashed when she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer soon after her last term was completed. Sister Jean faced the diagnosis and treatment with the same courage, faith, and determination that exemplified her entire life.

On July 6, 2023, Sister Jean moved from her home in Fond du Lac to Nazareth Center where she received loving care until the time of her death.

Preceding Sister Jean in death were her parents and her brother John L. Steffes.

Sister Jean is survived by her sisters Mary (Giovanni) Cappellari, Carol (Thomas) Freund; her sister-in-law Nancy Steffes; nieces, nephews and their families, and the Sisters of St. Agnes, with whom she lived, prayed, and ministered.

Visitation will take place Thursday, August 31, from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at Nazareth Court and

Center, 375 Gillett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

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A Prayer Service will be held at 11:00 a.m. in the Nazareth Center Chapel. Visitation will continue after the Prayer Service until 1:30 p.m.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be offered for Sister Jean at 2:00 p.m. on August 31 at St. Francis Home Chapel, 33 Everett Street, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, with Father Carl Diederichs presiding. Burial will follow at St. Joseph Springs Cemetery, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Memorials may be directed to the CSA Mission Advancement Office, 320 County Road K, Fond du Lac, WI 54937.

The Sisters of St. Agnes and Sister Jean's family are grateful to the nurses and staff of Nazareth Court and Center and Hospice Hope for their care of Sister Jean.

Zacherl Funeral Home is serving the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes.