



Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
St. Paul Province

Mary F. Heinen, CSJ
1933-2014

“... and Mary Treasured All These Things in Her Heart.”

Luke 2.51

These wonderful words from Luke's Gospel about Mary, the Mother of God, are reflected in Mary Heinen's life, too. For 80 years these words were part of her life as she reflected upon them and as the gifts of her life unfolded. Mary died on January 1, the feast of Mary, the Mother of God.

Mary was born on May 14, 1933, in New Ulm, Minnesota to Arthur and Clara (Neuwirth) Heinen, the fourth of five children. One surmises, given the tenor of the rest of her life, that she was very busy as a child and teenager making friends, entering contests, and expressing her opinion on various issues. She graduated from Holy Trinity High School in New Ulm and, in 2004, returned to the school to receive the school's Distinguished Alumni Humanitarian award, one of many recognitions she received throughout her life.

Upon graduation from high school, Mary joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Paul Province, in September 1951. Before she knew it, she had BS in nursing from the College of St. Catherine, a MS in nursing and nursing education from the Catholic University, and a Ph.D. in higher education and administration from the University of Minnesota. She used her education to advance the health care ministry of the Catholic Church and of the CSJ (Congregation of St. Joseph) community. Other than the Catholic Health Care Association and nationally-known Sister Simone Campbell, there was probably no greater supporter for the Affordable Health Care Act than Mary.

Mary's leadership in health care issues was well evidenced in critical situations. In 1969, as the CSJ School of Nursing in Fargo closed, Mary's role was pivotal as the school was incorporated into associate and baccalaureate degree programs at North Dakota State University. Later, Mary worked with Ann Joachim Moore, CSJ, to develop associate degree programs in health and human service programs at St. Mary's Junior College, the first such college in Minnesota.

Others recognized Mary's leadership skills and, in 1979, she moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where she served as vice president for mission for the CSJ Health Care Corporation. There she worked with the chief executive officers from 12 Carondelet hospitals and with CSJ congregational and province leaders to create a single CSJ national health care network. In doing so, Mary laid a strong foundation for today's Ascension Health Network, a collaboration involving the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and three other religious communities.

In 1988, Mary was elected director of the St. Paul Province, a position that included responsibility for the province's ministries in education, health care, and social services. She, and the CSJ community, were faced with some very serious issues during that time. Two stand out: the sale of St. Mary's Hospital, Minneapolis, and the CSJ commitment to Cretin-Derham Hall High School, St. Paul. Mary worked with St. Mary's Hospital Board of Directors to secure the successful sale of the hospital to the Fairview Health

System in 1991. The ongoing sponsorship by the Sisters of St. Joseph at Cretin-Derham Hall, following the 1987 merger of the schools, was critical to ensure equality of education and leadership opportunities for the girls who had transferred from the former Derham Hall High School. These were difficult decisions given the CSJ history at each institution and both have "stood the test of time" and have proven to be wise decisions.

One last ministry awaited Mary. In 1992 she was appointed director of advocacy and ethics for Carondelet LifeCare Ministries (St. Mary's Health Clinics). She brought to this ministry the same untiring enthusiasm and commitment that characterized all of her work as she tracked health care legislation, especially bills pertaining to programs for medically underserved and uninsured people in Minnesota.

That Mary was a well-respected and recognized leader throughout her life is evidenced by appointments to various boards, commissions, and committees within the CSJ community as well as other organizations. She served on the Archdiocesan Commission on Pastoral Health, and on the boards of Catholic Health Association-Minnesota, Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, HealthEast, and the Minnesota State Board of Nursing, among others.

At the time of her death Mary was a member of the St. Catherine University and the Minnesota Center for Health Care Ethics boards and the St. Joseph Hospital Reserved Powers Working Group. Especially as regards the latter, Mary's ability to research and focus questions was critical to maintaining the Catholic commitment at St. Joseph's and Woodwinds/St. Joseph's hospitals, members of the HeathEast System.

Let's remember, too, that Mary was a lot of fun! And did you ever meet anyone who could talk for five minutes, using only one sentence and not taking a breath? How she loved her family -- her sister Liz and brother-in-law Jack Cole, and their children, Jane (Steve) Veide, and Bob and Joel; her grandnieces and nephews Nicaela, Mike, Alex, and Annika, great grandnephews Logun and Caleb, and other family members Marjun and Dave. Logun, age five, was an unending source of delight for Mary. Remember the time she took him shopping and he disappeared into a rack of clothes causing Mary great distress? Or what about the mimosas Mary enjoyed while visiting Nicaela in California?

Mary's cancer surgery was in mid-September and the shock of her prognosis was difficult to absorb. Mary Madonna Ashton, CSJ, with whom Mary lived for over 20 years, was a constant source of strength and companionship. Jane and Bob visited often. Mary moved to Carondelet Village the day following Christmas and there the CSJ community and Mary's family kept vigil until her death. Hopefully, the last message Mary heard was from Logun: "Auntie Mary, I love you. I'll miss you." Yes, Logun, we all will.

Mary died at Carondelet Village on January 1st surrounded by her family and her dear friend Mary Madonna Ashton. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for her on Monday, January 6th in Our Lady of the Presentation Chapel at St. Joseph's Provincial House. Interment was in Resurrection Cemetery.

Rest in peace, Mary.