Joan Marie Rigney, SHCJ

Educator

May 26, 1927 – July 8, 2016

Rosemont, Pennsylvania – Sister Joan Rigney, who was a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus for 68 years, died of multiple organ failure at Holy Child Center in Rosemont, PA, on Thursday, July 8, 2016. She was 89.

Sister Joan was born on Long Island, the youngest in the family of Douglas and Mary (Kehoe) Rigney. She had an older sister, Ruth, and a brother, Douglas. After the family had moved to New York City, she attended Our Lady of Lourdes grade school and then St. Walburga’s Academy for high school. Her long-felt desire for religious life was fulfilled in 1945 when she entered the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, the Sisters who had taught her for eight years. Although her group began in Sharon Hill, they moved to New Sharon in Rosemont for their novitiate.

Professed as Sister Mary Martin in 1948, Sister Joan’s first teaching assignment was at Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child, Summit, NJ. This was followed by five more years: one at Holy Child Academy in Drexel Hill, PA, and four at St. Edward School in Philadelphia. Sister Joan’s administrative gifts were recognized in 1958 when she was named principal of Assumption School, in Pasadena, CA. For the next nine years, she was able to introduce innovative programs and share her love of music through annual concerts. She returned to New York in 1967 to teach at Sts. Peter and Paul School in Fleetwood, NY. For three years Sister Joan was the supervisor of Holy Child schools in the New York Province before returning to Assumption School as principal for four more years.

In 1974, Sister Joan’s ministry took a new turn as she was assigned to Immaculate Heart Parish in Pacoima, CA, where she served as director of religious education and worked with senior adults. A year later, Sister Joan moved to Portland, OR, where she was director of religious education at St. Rose Parish.

In 1977, Sister Joan offered to go to Chile where she spent five years, challenged and grateful for the rich intercultural experience. This experience led her to do mission education for the Office of the Propagation of the Faith in Washington, DC. For six years Sister Joan visited schools and parishes talking about the missions. She later worked at the Catholic Spanish Center and served as superior for the Sisters living in the Washington area. From 1991 until 1999, Sr. Joan served at Annunciation School in Washington, DC, as a teacher for one year and as principal for the next seven. After a sabbatical in the year of her golden jubilee, Sister Joan served as receptionist at Casa Cornelia Law Center in San Diego, CA, and later as a volunteer at the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego. Heart surgery in 2001 curtailed her ministry and led her to the Sisters’ community in Rye, NY, where she became director of activities. After suffering a debilitating stroke and shoulder injury six years ago, Sister Joan moved to Holy Child Center where she renewed old friendships with former students and with the Sisters she had lived and ministered with over many years.

Sister Joan earned a bachelor of science degree in education from Villanova University, a master of arts degree in educational administration from Loyola University of Los Angeles and a certificate in Theology from Providence College.

She is survived by loving nieces and nephews and their families.

Friends and family are invited to a service of remembrance on Tuesday, July 12, at 4:00 p.m. and to the Funeral Mass on Wednesday, July 13, at 11:00 a.m. at the New Sharon Chapel, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, PA. Preceding Mass, friends and family are invited to visit at 10:00 a.m. Funeral arrangements were handled by Donohue’s Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, PA 19010.