

Sister Monica Marie Toenjes, C.PP.S.

Born: February 5, 1936

Professed: August 10, 1958

Entered into Life: September 17, 2023

Verse on her memorial card:

“The Lord is compassion and love.”

Psalm III v. 4b



September 19, 2023

Dear Sisters, Family, and Friends,

Around 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, September 17, 2023, our Sister Monica Marie Toenjes went home to God. Her roommate and guardian angel, Joan Wester, was praying at her side as she had been for the past several weeks.

Jeanne Marie Toenjes was the youngest of the eleven children of Bernard and Norma (Doering) Toenjes. In her autobiography, she wrote, “I was born in the wee hours of the morning of February 5, 1936.”

Jeanne was baptized at Our Lady of Sorrows in St. Louis and attended her first years of elementary school there. In 1946, the family moved to Fenton. It was a significant adjustment to go from the large city school to the three-room school at St. Paul in Fenton. There she was in the same classroom as her brother, Paul. She recalls that the teacher, Sister Domitilla, asked the class about the feminine form of the name Paul. They responded, “Jeanne.”

It was also in Fenton that Jeanne experienced her first attraction toward her future ministry. While helping Sister Domitilla average grades in the tiny convent parlor, she saw a photo of the sisters in Finland and was intrigued by it. It led her to volunteer for our Finnish mission shortly after professing vows.

Jeanne was received into our novitiate on July 25, 1956, receiving the name Sister Monica Marie. She professed first vows on August 10, 1958. Sister Monica Marie earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history at Fontbonne College.

Sister Monica Marie taught elementary grades in Missouri at St. John the Baptist, St. Agatha, and Holy Family in St. Louis; Assumption, O’Fallon; St.

Brendan, Mexico; and Linda Vista, Chesterfield. She also taught at St. Peter, Quincy, Illinois, and she assisted in the library at St. Mary's College in O'Fallon. For forty-one years, Sister Monica Marie ministered in Helsinki and Tampere, Finland, teaching English to preschoolers. Upon returning to the U.S. in 2017, Sister Monica Marie served at St. Agatha Center in St. Louis until her retirement to Abbey Senior Health in 2020.

A May 2002 article in the Tampere daily paper quoted Sister Monica Marie as saying, "Spending time with the children is the most important thing." Having grown up in a large family where "alone" time probably was non-existent, Sister Monica Marie always preferred being with others. She applied this desire for the benefit of her students. Her yearning to be in the presence of others may have prompted this comment from a former Tampere colleague, "She was a big person in a teeny-weeny body."

Sister Monica Marie was preceded in death by her parents and all her siblings, Bernard (Agatha) Toenjes, Marie (Joseph) Donovan, Agnes (Robert) Donovan, Rita Toenjes, Gertrude (Harold) Noftsinger, Karl (Shirley) Toenjes, Louis (Bonnie) Toenjes, Rosemary (John) Duckworth, Paul (Delores) Toenjes, and Lawrence (Marianne) Toenjes. She is survived by nieces and nephews of several generations. Let us keep them in our prayers along with her faithful friend, Joan Wester.

We will welcome Sister Monica Marie's body to St. Joseph's Chapel at 1 p.m. on Saturday, September 23, 2023. We will gather for Sharing of Memories at 2 p.m. followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at 2:30 p.m. Her burial will be in our convent cemetery.

For her memorial card, Sister Monica Marie chose this verse from Psalm 111: "The Lord is compassion and love." We give thanks for the compassion and love she shared with others, and we pray that she may now be experiencing the fullness of these words.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Janice Bader". The ink is dark and the writing is fluid and personal.

Sr. Janice Bader