



In Loving Memory

Sister Mary Jean Louise (Annette Mary) Rechner, SSND

Born September 9, 1918, in what she called the “little town” of Appleton, Wisconsin to Louise and Genevieve (Alberty) Rechner, Annette was the seventh of ten children. She noted that she and her siblings, “grew and learned and loved and teased and quarreled and were happy together.”

Annette and her siblings attended St. Joseph’s grade school in Appleton and St. Mary’s High School in Marinette. A firm love for the Notre Dame Sisters and the Capuchin Priests developed. Her parents insisted that there was always at least “one Rechner” at the daily Mass, even during the summer. She wrote, “Yes, there were times when our attendance was a matter of compulsion, but it was this thorough and deeply Catholic spirit of our parents that shaped our habits of life.”

As a child, Annette began violin lessons and was very earnest about her practicing. She noted that her brothers weren’t thrilled and even, “our dog howled when I tried my skill at Stradivarius! However, when concert time came and I sat with other members of the orchestra, I found my Mom and Dad and brothers and sisters among the audience.”

During Annette’s sophomore year of high school that her father died of a sudden heart attack. Her mother continued to make all the sacrifices necessary to ensure that all the Rechner children had a Catholic education.

On August 28, 1936 Annette’s mother accompanied her to move into 1324 N. Milwaukee Street to enter the convent in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She wrote that, “my mother felt it was a privilege to have a daughter in religion, yet, at the same time, she wasn’t sure I could take those drab red walls and barred windows on Milwaukee Street. But visiting me during my candidature and later at the mission houses proved it wasn’t the walls but the people behind them that counted.”

Annette professed first vows on July 20, 1939 and was given the name Jean Louise after her parents. She received a bachelor’s from Mount Mary University, Milwaukee, in 1951.

She was first missioned to teach at Holy Angels School in West Bend, Wisconsin. She taught, first, second and third grades there for 16 years also teaching the First Communion Class. She called those children her “prayer team” praying for special intentions. They prayed for her mom, who after suffering from cancer for nine months, died in 1950. They also prayed for her three brothers who served in the Air Force during World War II and all came home safe and sound, which she credited to her “prayer team.”

Birth
September 9, 1918

Baptism
September 15, 1918

Profession
July 20, 1939

Death
January 17, 2017

Burial
Notre Dame of Elm Grove
Cemetery
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

continued

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*Sister Mary Jean Louise
Rechner*



Sister Jean Louise ministered for 39 years in Catholic education, teaching in Wisconsin at St. Boniface, Milwaukee; Holy Angels, West Bend; St. Aloysius, West Allis; Mary Queen of Heaven, West Allis; St. Mary, Port Washington; and at All Saints in Logansport, Indiana. She served in school administration at St. Anne in Escanaba, Michigan.

Sister Jean was called to be community leader at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Convent in Mount Calvary, Wisconsin, where she served for eight years. She was known for being joyful and playful as a community leader often playing jokes on others and helping plan fun times and special occasions.

In 1986, at age 68, she began a new ministry and returned to Milwaukee. She lived with the senior citizens at Cherry Court and later at Convent Hill; as part of a ministry called “Sisters Interacting with Seniors.” It was a special time for her to live among strangers who quickly became friends to interact joyfully, to recognize their needs and to be “sister” to all.

In 1997, at the age of 79, Jeannie retired and moved to Notre Dame of Elm Grove. She was known to enjoy an evening of Mexican Train, or a bus ride to see the fall colors, or a visit from her Capuchin friends or being entertained by the recorder group. She would volunteer for various tasks and could often be heard, asking the sister with her: “Isn’t it time for a Sabbath moment? Let’s share a soda and some cookies or let’s have a little recess.”

She was also known for having photos of paths, roads and trails adorning her walls. She wrote, “I have collected pictures of paths through the years and have displayed some of my favorites in my room. I use them in my daily prayer, asking Jesus what path I should take this day. I know that Jesus is with me on any path I take.”

Sister Jean died January 17, 2017 she was 98. She is survived by nieces, nephews, dear friends and the SSND Community. Preceded in death are her parents, her brothers Louis, Carl, John, Robert, Francis and her sisters Rita, Genevieve, Amelia and Helen.

*This remembrance is compiled from SSND archival information and eulogy
written by Sister Joan Marie Van Beek, SSND*

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of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

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THROUGH EDUCATION