

## **SISTER MARY JEAN PETRARCA, SC,**

Age 91, entered eternal life April 19, 2024 at Caritas Christi, the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in Greensburg, in her 72nd year of religious life. She was the only child of Louis and Anna Marie (Allen) Petrarca, who preceded her in death. She is survived by a cousin, Jack Petrarca; friends; and her religious community.

Born in Torrance, PA, Sister Mary Jean entered the congregation of the Sisters of Charity on January 1, 1952, from SS. Simon and Jude Parish in Blairsville, PA. She earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics and biology from Seton Hill University and a master's degree in Mathematics from Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH. She was certified in occupational therapy from the University of Pennsylvania in the neurodevelopment treatment approach (NDT) in Cerebral Palsy from Georgetown University.

Sister Mary Jean began her teaching ministry in elementary and high schools in the Altoona-Johnstown, Greensburg, and Pittsburgh dioceses. She then ministered as an occupational therapist at the Pioneer School in Brookline, PA, designed for students with disabilities. After that, she spent four months helping Sisters of Charity in Korea, aiding in establishing the Eun Hae School for children with disabilities.

In 1997, Sister Mary Jean began the ministry she longed for: helping individuals with developmental disabilities to recognize their gifts and become self-sufficient. She became one of the founding members of the Emmaus Community, dedicated to providing inclusive, community-based homes, in-home services, and advocacy to persons with intellectual disabilities. Sister Mary Jean supported Emmaus in many capacities for over twenty-five years—as chief executive officer, employee, volunteer, and Board member. When she was chosen to receive the Outstanding Service Award for her long record of selfless giving, the executives of the Emmaus Foundation said, "We believe no one could be more deserving of this award. She served with great humility and dedication to helping others." When asked how her work with the Emmaus Community enabled her to minister in the Sisters of Charity Vincentian-Setonian tradition, she replied, "In the past, those with developmental disabilities were hidden from society. The Emmaus Community ministers in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton to care for anyone in need, regardless of religious affiliation, race, or creed. Emmaus takes the extra step to serve all people by doing what Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton did."

Sister Mary Jean received the Manifesting the Kingdom award in the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 2002 for recognizing the presence of Jesus in her life and manifesting the kingdom of God among us. She was nominated for this award in light of her service to the Church. Referring to Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton's quote, "I wish to fit you for the world in which you are destined to live," Sister Mary Jean reflected, "My ministry has allowed me to help others in my first love as an educator by working with others who recognize the unique gifts of each individual."

Sister Mary Jean ministered at Emmaus House until her retirement in 2016. She moved to Caritas Christi in 2022. The Sisters of Charity are grateful for the nursing staff and employees' care for Sister Mary Jean.

We thank God for all the blessings many individuals with disabilities have received through Sister Mary Jean's dedication and love. May she now receive the fullness of God's blessings in eternity as she joins St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Company of Charity, and her loved ones.

Family and friends will be received on Monday, April 22, at Caritas Christi, 129 DePaul Center Road, Greensburg, PA, from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm. A prayer vigil sharing memories in the Chapel of the Assumption will follow at 7:00 pm. A Mass of Christian Burial will be offered at 10:30 am on Tuesday, April 23. Burial in the Sisters' Cemetery will immediately follow Mass.

The funeral liturgy will be live-streamed; access through the link:

<https://venue.streamspot.com/2af9e1eb>

Memorial contributions may be made to Sisters of Charity, DePaul Center, 144 DePaul Center Road, Greensburg, PA 15601. For more information, visit the website, [www.scsch.org](http://www.scsch.org).

Send condolences [post-gazette.com/gb](http://post-gazette.com/gb)