

Sister Joan Marie Sale
January 2, 1933 – June 12, 2001

Filled with life and joy, Sr. Joan Marie met each person with a sense of respect and wonder. Her affability and readiness to communicate with anyone showed her openness and interest in each person she met. Working in the General House for the last 5 years of her life, she was in contact with people from all over the world, and contact with her always left an impression! Her love for God, her deep spirituality, her great capacity for celebrating life in all its forms, her generosity, her ability to laugh even at herself were qualities which made her a person one could not forget.

Born in New York City as the oldest of three children, Sr. Joan grew up surrounded by the vitality of a great city. Her cultural heritage included American Indian, Slovakian, Irish, and various other ethnic combinations—all of which made her responsive to people from all cultures. She attended St. James School where she met and grew to love the Sisters of St. John the Baptist.

After entering the Congregation and professing her first vows in 1951, she taught briefly in the States before being sent as a missionary to Santiago, Chile. Little ones were always her favorites; she taught first grade for many, many years. After returning to the States, she became a Spanish teacher in St. John Villa Academy High School. From there she was called to return to Chile as the Regional Superior. She accepted this out of love for her Sisters and for the Lord. Serving as Regional or local Superior, as teacher, as secretary, she gave herself fully to whatever task she was asked to fulfill.

Living in the General House in Rome, Sr. Joan was a loyal support to Mother John Marie, her friend from elementary school days, an integral part of the secretarial staff in English and Spanish, a friend to the General Council with whom she worked and for whom she created a spirit of joy and celebration, and a true Sister to all who lived in the Generalate, open and responsive to each one, no matter what her language or culture or age.

Her sudden and unexpected death on the day of her planned departure for America left all of the Sisters and her family in a state of shock. But her life is not ended; her spirit pervades the persons whose lives she touched and the places where she lived and worked, and that spirit will never die. The gift that the Lord gave to us in Sr. Joan is ours, and it will last until we are all reunited in the arms of our Heavenly Father.