

*Welcome, Mass of Christian Burial - Sister Jean Lenz, OSF
Sr. Mary Rose Lieb, OSF – President and General Superior
January 25, 2012*

Good evening and welcome to this Mass of Christian Burial; to a celebration of the life of a most remarkable person, Sister Jean Lenz. We welcome with gratitude and appreciation Jean's friend, colleague and 'boss', Holy Cross Father Mark Poorman who will be the presider for tonight's Liturgy.

We gather as Jeans' family members and relatives, as her religious sisters, classmates and associates; as friends, colleagues, and fellow trustees; as her students, and her Farley Hall women; as individuals who have been touched profoundly by her listening, her caring, her mentoring, her directing, her counseling. We gather in joy, in gratitude, in hope and in sorrow. Let us promise one another our prayerful support and our sympathies as each of us will miss the earthly presence of Sr. Jean but also as each of us will undoubtedly begin to experience the Heavenly presence of Sr. Jean.

In a particular way we extend our heartfelt love and sympathy to Jean's family members: Ray and Ethel Lenz, Jack and Pat Lenz and Trudy and Mike Ford; to her nieces and nephew; and her grandnieces and grandnephews. Each one of you was and is very special to Jean. Each one of you was a part of many of her fabulous, captivating stories. For nearly 82 years, Jean loved and was loved deeply by all the members of the close-knit, welcoming Mansell and Lenz families and the relationship continues on. Yes, it is changed, but it is not ended. This is what we celebrate here tonight!

Jean loved her vocation and her religious life as a Joliet Franciscan which she lived fervently for nearly 60 years. Even more, she loved her sisters who also were the subjects or the objects of many of her stories. Sr. Jean is the 912th of our sisters to be living in Heaven. I imagine she and the others are enjoying a grand reunion and I'm equally sure the stories of the past and some which are already in the making are being shared right now with and in the presence of the greatest teacher and story-teller of all, Jesus!

A holy, even mystical, positive, and fun-loving person with a quick wit, a genuine concern for the other, twinkling dual-colored eyes and a ready smile, Jean treasured and thrived in her ministries as teacher at St. Francis Academy and the College of St. Francis, in her service as a USF Trustee for over 30 years, and in her religious vocation and formation work for the Congregation. And, we certainly know Jean cherished those 38 magical years living and ministering at her beloved Notre Dame.

Sr. Jean was one of those individuals who has friends, students, colleagues and acquaintances; people she mentored, counseled, directed; and others with whom she

studied, worked, ministered and lived life which number, without exaggeration, is in the five digit range! And, Jean remembered not only each one of these tens of thousands of people who were an important part of her life but she remembered stories of their lives and of how their lives intersected for a brief time or coincided from some beginning point to forever with her life! This unique characteristic and priceless gift made Sr. Jean the remarkable, beyond the ordinary legend that she is. Jean met each person as one who was special, important, a gift from God; as one with his or her own talents, struggles and accomplishments, fears and challenges, hopes and dreams. With Jean each person had his or her own stories to be told, heard, lived. And, Jean was genuinely interested in listening, understanding and sharing the stories of life with each person she met. When talking with Jean, one felt her undivided attention and total interest in them and whatever was the topic of their conversation!

As we celebrate tonight an earthly life changed, over a life time, into a Heavenly life, trios emerge as a part of my reflection. Jean was imbued throughout her being with God –as creator, redeemer and spirit. She was totally immersed in the life and times, in the important and the not-so-important, in the serious and the humorous of three ‘families’ and their extended families and expanding circles of friends and acquaintances: her birth family, her Joliet Franciscan family and her Holy Cross/University of Notre Dame family. There are three Scripture readings which are a part of tonight’s Liturgy. They were chosen with Sister Jean in mind and heart AND with her approval. In the first of these readings, from the Book of Sirach, we are reminded that the virtues, wealth of experience and the name/reputation/legacy of one continues on, after the body is buried in peace, *when* their families ‘gather to re-tell their wisdom’ and ‘assemble to proclaim their praise.’

Let us celebrate tonight – and not only tonight but also in gatherings and assemblies here after and with all generations to come - the goodness of God which we experienced and saw in our sister, aunt, friend, colleague, teacher, mentor – Sister Jean Lenz. Certainly our world and those who inhabit it would benefit and hopefully be uplifted and buoyed by the re-telling of the stories and the remembering of the life of one so keenly aware of Christ present in each person and all of creation.