

Sisters of St. Francis

o f M a r y I m m a c u l a t e

Sister Jacqueline Hirsch (Ellen Marie) died at Our Lady of Angels on December 9, 2021. A native of Joliet, Illinois, Sister Jacqueline was one of four children born to the late Alfred and Marie (Gorshe) Hirsch on May 22, 1929. She was preceded in death by her brother, James (Jean) Hirsch of Joliet. She is survived by her brother, Robert (Linda) of Estero, Florida, her sister, Rita (James) Kubalewski of Joliet, along with many nieces, nephews, cousins, and close friends.

Jackie's death was a surprise for us. Her grade school friend and convent classmate, Sr. Bernadine Hasse, had died earlier that morning. We had been awaiting her passage, but not Jackie's. Jackie seemed to drink from the fountain of youth. Her spirit was so engaging and welcoming. She exuded the warmth of the Floridian climate where she had lived for so many years. Our Congregational feast of the Immaculate Conception had delighted her spirit as she enjoyed seeing so many of us gathered at OLA's chapel. But it was true. She quietly died that morning: surprised by the Spirit of the God she so faithfully and generously served.

Jacqueline Marie was baptized at St. John's June 2, 1929. She attended St. John the Baptist grade school and Providence High School. After high school she worked with the Joliet Herald News in the Ad department. She was a Cub fan in her youth, taking the train and subway/L train to Wrigley Field with her friends. Her brother-in-law Jim recalled that she joined the Joliet Franciscans rather than the Providence Sisters as she had felt more at home with them. Her Postulancy began in January of 1948. When requesting to proceed into the Novitiate, she wrote: "May I receive the holy habit of St. Francis?...I do not want to be just an ordinary nun, but a really good nun—a credit to the community and a true follower of St. Francis." Her final vows were received on August 13, 1953.

Sister Jackie received her BA and MA in Theology from the College of St. Francis, Joliet. At Cardinal Stritch College (Milwaukee), she received her MA in Education. Early on Jackie expressed interest in working with young children, interested social studies and library work. Her professional activity incorporated all of these. In Illinois and Ohio, she spent 16 years teaching in elementary grades. In 1967, she moved to Florida and lived there until 2016. There she taught junior high for seven years at St. Coleman in Pompano Beach and worked two years as the Archdiocese of Miami as a consultant for social studies. Later, she taught Social Studies for 19 years at Carrollton HS in Miami. About her teaching, her brother-in-law James recounted that Jackie had told him that it was important to her "to broaden the minds and vision of her financially secure students, by bringing them to programs that served the developmentally disabled. She encouraged her students to have conversations with these children, to get to know them as fellow travelers in this life." When her teaching career ended in 2005, Jackie moved to Boca Raton and spent over 10 years as a library assistant at the public library.

Alleluia!



Sister Jacqueline Hirsch, OSF

What is not so factually recorded about Sr. Jackie are her in-between spaces that filled her time when not in the classroom or library. Jackie regularly spent sister time with our Fort Lauderdale community. She celebrated holidays with them. When some were needing help after surgeries, she moved in with them to cook, clean and care for them. This "care-giving" kindness included her relatives, as well as parish members. She had made that wonderful connection with Mother Alfred Moes' relatives with whom she spent many social visits, becoming like family to them. Hospitality was so key to Sister Jackie. She loved Florida and loved sharing it. Family came. Sister classmates visited often. Coordinators enjoyed time with her. And she loved travelling. She visited Europe. She'd join Sister Mary Fran Seeley on trips. She travelled to the Washington D.C. State Capital several times introducing her high schoolers to the political hub of our country.

Then, in 2006, her "retirement" in Florida provided her time to focus on a "ministry of presence." About this ministry she said: "To be Franciscan means to be aware and present, to give our time to listen, to assist, to recognize a person's worth, to encourage, to pray with and for and to bring a sense of peace to those whom we meet." Give of her time, she did. She ran drives to obtain money for "The Hunger Program," a not-for-profit service that gave 100 % of the funds to the needy. She assisted in a Senior Care Program and literacy program. Her life left no stone unturned.

Jackie wrote in her Five Wishes booklet: "My life has been richly blessed with loving parents, brothers and sister, nieces and nephews and relatives and dear friends. I found joy in teaching and seizing opportunities (foreign travel) and accepting challenges that enabled me to grow and brought joy to my life and to all others on my life journey."

Jackie, you left us this request while celebrating your life with us: "Grieve not...nor speak of me with tears...but laugh and talk of me as though I were beside you. I loved you so... 'twas heaven here with you." It is hard to not shed tears and grieve for you. Thank you for your extraordinary life. We are so grateful to have had you back with us in Joliet. You have refreshed us with your love of life and love of God. Go in Peace to continue loving and serving your God eternally. Amen! Alleluia!