



Jean Kivel, CSJ

February 27, 1940 ~ January 1, 2019

An excellent teacher, exceptional storyteller, devoted family member and joy-filled lover of life are but a few ways those who knew her best describe Jean Elizabeth (Catherine Joseph) Kivel, CSJ. Born the youngest of seven in St. Paul, on February 27, 1940, Jean died peacefully on January 1, 2019, at Carondelet Village in St. Paul.

Jean entered the community of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1958. In 1964 she earned a BA in Elementary Education from the College of St. Catherine and in 1978 an MA in Special Education from the University of St. Thomas. Jean's vocational work included 35 years as a primary teacher, with 27 years at St. Michael in West St. Paul, MN. Colleagues remark, "Jean (Bonnie to her friends) was beloved by her students *and* their parents." Later, Jean happily served as volunteer at INSTEP, a CSJ sponsored program for young children whose parents could not afford daycare. Of her call as a CSJ Jean offered: "Jesus' vision demands that my life be counter-cultural... that I remember he uses the weak and poor to hold the treasure of life."

Offered by many friends:

She was nicknamed Bonnie by her father who used to sing "My Bonnie lies over the ocean" to her when she was a child.

Jean was an excellent primary teacher, well loved by her students and their parents. She loved and often frequented garage sales where she bought children's books and other items that her students needed and used them to supplement her classroom. She loved preparing her students for the reception of the sacraments, especially first communion.

She was very devoted to her brother, Father Joe, who like her and most of her siblings suffered from Alzheimer's. Even when she needed to take several buses to get to where he was, she was faithful. Even when he no longer recognized her, she continued to him. She made sure that his needs were cared for and that he was treated with dignity and respect.

Jean was a storyteller without measure. She used endless, appropriate and actual to the real event details. She would have an audience laughing, sometimes in disbelief! *That really happened?* Those stories were about things that she had experienced, like the time she took the megabus to Chicago to meet her sister. Never mind that she and her sister had different dates to meet and Jean was standing on the corner, not the best part of Chicago, waiting. What followed was being picked up by the police, riding in a patrol car, and so on, with calls back to St. Paul to verify that we really knew a Sister Jean, etc. She loved telling that story and many others like it. When she was able she would write some of the stories down. She even wrote stories to share with her students.

When she lost her eye, she had the opportunity to watch the technicians create a glass eye, which she used for some time. None of this was morbid to her; she was entranced by the experience, and through her telling we learned so much about a false eye and only one working eye.

Jean was always real. When she was frustrated you knew. But mostly she was upbeat and open to everyone. She sensed the goodness in others and was able to read and help dissipate tense situations.

Jean loved her Irish roots and Irish music, especially “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.” She always loved a good party, and making people happy. She had a great sense of humor and was very wise. She was deeply faithful to her family and loved spending time with all of them.

While on her many trips and adventures Jean would often come across a beautiful sight and say to her traveling companions “we should stop and have a retreat moment.”

I so enjoyed her good and positive nature. I will always remember her smile, twinkling brown eyes and ginger cookies!! When my mother passed away in 1995, Sr. Jean had her 2nd graders write me notes of condolence, complete with pictures. They were precious, both comforting and hilarious!

Jean is preceded in death by parents Katherine (McDermott) and Joseph G. Kivel; sisters Patty Haupt and Mary Paula Kenney; brothers Ed, Tom and Fr. Joseph Kivel. She is survived by sister Kay (Dennis) Byron; many cousins; nieces; nephews; countless lifelong friends; and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates.

Mass of Christian Burial as held Tuesday, [January 8, 2019](#), 11:00 AM, in Our Lady of the Presentation Chapel, 1884 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul, MN, with Visitation at 10:00 AM preceding Mass, and burial at Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights, MN.

Sister Jean, rest in love and peace.