

Eulogy for Sr. Mary Jude Watson

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A famous quote from Abraham Lincoln is " *In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.* " For Sister Jude she lived a long and fruitful life. She was like the Energizer bunny —she kept going and going doing God's work until she passed away. She led a simple life in an extraordinary way. She lived a life of deep faith, which enabled her to see God in everything and do God's will, whatever it may be.

For 36 years she served at Our Lady Star of the Sea School. She had many ways of encouraging children to develop a love of learning —whether it be through the Bible stories she told, preparing them for the sacraments, or simply showing them the meaning of fractions by dividing an orange into segments. As one of her colleagues once said, "*Sr. Jude could teach a table to read.*" What Sr. Jude did was build confidence and self-esteem in the children. She was always happy and loved and she always made the children feel happy and loved.

During her time at OLSS, she always ministered to the needy providing food, clothing, counseling, and comfort. She especially helped the people who lived in the Spanish camp until its demise, and also helped many many OLSS families.

Her kindness, her humility, her compassion, and her Christ-like ways enabled us to have a deep love for her. Her sense of humor, or should we say impishness, still today puts a smile on our

face. She loved Congressman Vito Fosella. Whenever he would visit our school she would swoon like a teenager. In fact, he came to visit her when she was leaving. He kissed her on the cheek. She was so happy she told us she was never washing her face again. She had the same reaction with Mayor Ed Koch. Sr. Jude was invited by Sr. Audrey to the luncheon that honored Sr. Audrey when she won Principal of the Year. Sr. Jude declined UNTIL she found out that her favorite, Mayor Ed Koch, was going to be there. So she attended the luncheon and managed for Mayor Koch to kiss her on the cheek —again she was never going to wash her face. Even when she was injured her sense of humor came through. In 2002 she fell in front of the Church into the shrubs. We had to call an ambulance. While we were waiting she made it very clear that we were not to touch her because she was waiting for a cute fireman to pick her up!

She even used God as a tool in her humor. When I was deciding whether to accept a position as a Principal in another school, she was adamant that I should remain at OLSS. So every day I would find something on my desk that might persuade me to stay. Sr. Jude didn't think this was working so she turned to God. She told me that she was making a novena for me to the Holy Spirit so I would make the right decision. And if the decision was YES, the Holy Spirit would come down and slit all four of my tires. I guess you all know my decision.

There is no way that anyone could have a conversation about Sr. Jude without talking about her love of animals. She took care of many abandoned animals — feeding them, caring for them and finding homes for them. The children would save their scraps at lunch. She would save some for her dogs at St Joseph by the Sea. Every day she would roll the scraps into a ball. There was a tannish dog named Floppy who would come to her classroom window every day, have his lunch ball of scraps, and leave. She had the children so aware of the importance of caring for animals that many of them wanted to bring in their dinners.

A graduate, who was a student when Sr Jude was here, shared this touching story with us. Sal would come to school early every day to help in the morning. One day Sr Jude told him that he had to come outside by the church and help her rescue a dog. When he got outside there was this mangy looking dog running around. Sal told her it wasn't a good idea to catch the dog especially because of its looks. Well Sr Jude caught the dog. She put it in Sal's arms and said here's the dog. Call it Lucky St. Francis. It's now your dog and don't ever give it back to its owner because they didn't take care of it. Sal knew his mother would never allow him to keep the dog. He went home, knocked on the door and handed the dog to his mom. Lucky lived with them for 14 years. It was the best dog his family ever had. Years later, as an adult, Sal met up with Sr. Jude. He didn't think she would not remember him but when he went over and kissed her she said, "How's LUCKY?" ... Lucky, what a great name!

And for all of us how LUCKY, how fortunate, and how blessed we have been to have had Sr Jude in our lives. Her spirit is now interwoven into our hearts and souls like threads of gold and silver. She truly was a gift from God. We know that she will always be watching over us. Thank you, Sr Jude, for loving us unconditionally!