

SISTER JUDE (NORA)

OF THE SACRED HEART

SHIEL



*BORN TO EARTHLY LIFE:
SEPTEMBER 5, 1928*

*BORN TO ETERNAL LIFE:
MAY 12, 2012*

Sister Nora Shiel
Province of U.S.A. & Canada
1928 – 2012

Nora Shiel was born in Meelick, Swinford, Co. Mayo (Ireland), on 5 September 1928. Her excellent parents, Daniel Shiel and Mary Ellen Connell, raised their nine children as devout Christians.

Having completed her primary education at the national school, Nora attended La Sagesse school in Swinford. But while loving Sisters of La Sagesse, she felt herself called to work outside her country and entered the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in Ferbane in October 1945. Her friends remember her as a very sweet blonde with big brown eyes. The years changed the colour of the hair, but the smiling brown eyes remained throughout her life.

Admitted to the Novitiate on April 4, 1946, she received the name of Sister Jude of the Sacred Heart. She made profession on March 11, 1948 and left Ireland on 27th December, 1948 together with Sr Teresa Corr, Sr Gabrielle O'Neill, Sr Anne Therese Murray, Sr Agnes Kenny and Sr Anne Egan. They arrived in Sydney after 5 weeks at sea only to board another ship bound for Wellington. New Zealand. They eventually arrived at the headquarters of the Province In Auckland on 28th February 1949.

After a short stay in Auckland, Sr Jude, together with Sr Agnes, set sail again, this time bound for Suva, Fiji which was their obedience after profession. Loreto Hall. She was one of the pioneer students together with Sr Agnes Kenny and Sr Gabrielle O'Neill. They graduated with a Primary Teaching Certificate from Loreto Hall, Auckland, run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart she began her teaching career in Suva, in 1952 and here Sr Jude was appointed Principal of St Philomena's from 1952 - 1956. From 1959 - 1961, Sr Jude became Principal of St Joseph's Convent Boarding and Day School. In 1956 (March 19th) Sr Jude became one of the founding Staff members of the newly established St Joseph's Secondary School. She spent some years as a lecturer at Corpus

Christi Training College. Sr Jude remained in Fiji as a teacher until May 1964.

Her wonderful teaching methods made her stand out and she was appointed director of the State Teaching School. Her skills were appreciated by both students and authorities. She had a smile, a happy disposition and a desire to help everyone and each student individually. In 1962 she was recalled to New Zealand to teach in Tauranga. But paying the price of exhausting work, she had to return to Ireland for a long rest. She was not to see the South Seas again.

In 1965 she was sent to Canada to teach in our school in Hamilton, Ontario. What a change from the islands of the South Seas, what an adaptation to the Canadian winters. Adjust she did, and in the school system, she used her many teaching skills to enrich her grade 6 students in St. Joseph's School. After four years, she was sent to southern California where she taught until 1983 in Saints Peter and Paul Elementary School, Wilmington for one year, and then transferred to St. Catherine Laboure Elementary School, Torrance, about ten miles distant. She was a member of a three teacher team who taught grades 4, 5, and 6. She loved her classroom and was an excellent teacher. She became very involved in the Religious Education Program (CCD) of the parish and was deeply devoted to this form of evangelization. At St. Catherine Laboure Parish, she was active in the Neo-Catechumenate Program and Eucharistic Ministry. Fortunately, she did have the privilege of visiting the Holy Land with the parish Neo-Catechumenate group. This proved to be an altogether tremendous and fulfilling experience for them and was often recalled in later years.

With Sister Jude (Nora), one learned her values more by what she did, rather than by what she said. The bonds forged in her South Sea days became clearly evident when any of the sisters from there passed through Los Angeles, on their way to Ireland. Sister Jude laid aside all she could to host and toast them with affection and esteem. Very obviously, the feelings were mutual. In relationships, Sister Jude showed sincerity and simplicity. She respected schedules and peoples' time and so was herself

very punctual. She valued learning and would appreciate the opportunity of returning to a University campus for a series of lectures or a course. She likewise loved time of quiet prayer at the Benedictine Monastery. Her later position (chaplain in the hospital trauma centre) was intense and stressful and so quiet hours to centre herself were important. Sister Jude felt drawn to this work and, while continuing her educational responsibilities, she completed the required Clinical Pastoral Education Course, and attained certification. Daniel Freeman Hospital, Inglewood, was within bus distance from St. Catherine Laboure convent and it was there in 1983 that Sister Jude became a Pastoral Care Associate. She loved this ministry and devoted herself to it for twenty years. In 1990 a vacancy opened up at St. Francis Medical Center, Lynwood, California and Sister Jude was accepted for this position. Brother Richard Hirbe, fcp, was Director of the Pastoral Care Office and he greatly appreciated Sister Nora's compassion, dedication and professionalism. She could ask the insightful questions regarding controversial issues, was highly qualified in necessary pastoral skills and experience, and in addition was friendly and witty. She used her social connections effectively for the benefit of others. Basically, in her heart she was always serving God's poor. She devised strategies on how a surplus here could meet a need there. From one location to another goods and services were traded. Commuting to her hospital work or transporting merchandise was always a challenge for Sister Jude who never drove a car. Where public transport was available, she used it. Good friends and sisters in the community willingly gave time and effort to help.

After many years she confessed to Brother Richard that St. Joseph had sent her to St. Francis Medical Center. On hearing of her death, he commented, "She came from a strong background of teaching and missionary work in the Fiji Islands. She took to the team at St. Francis like a duck to water. She assisted in writing plays and would supply the props: hats, scarves, wigs and glasses and was the official Irish Trifle Maker. One of the saddest days for me was when Sister Jude gave me her letter of resignation. After she left we exchanged letters monthly, almost up to the time of her death. Patients still come and say, 'Sister

Jude sent me to get something to eat.' Yes - Sister Jude never left St. Francis." Brother Richard admitted that he cried when he heard of her death.

In 2004 Sister Jude realized that age was catching up with her and she made the decision to withdraw from the turmoil of ministering in a busy hospital. Her decision to return to Ireland to live her retirement was difficult, but she sincerely believed that God was reminding her of the country where she had first discovered her vocation to Cluny.

She was sent to Gallen Priory, Ferbane, now a Nursing Home. Her pastoral skills proved to be useful and she generously gave her time to the residents. Failing health necessitated her transfer to Mount Sackville in 2011 and she adapted well. We noticed how much she knew how to entertain and communicate without ever falling into chatter. Her condition deteriorated gradually and on May 12, 2012, Sister Jude returned to the Father's house that she had loved and served so well.