



**Sister Mary Jeanine Bradford  
1934-2011**

Sister Mary Jeanine was born August 30, 1934, in Fonda, Iowa the sixth of nine children of Joseph H. and Cleo Ellen (Nixon) Bradford. She was baptized Alice on August 30, 1934 at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, Fonda. She has four brothers, Francis of Richland Center, Wisconsin; James (her twin) of Guthrie Center, Iowa; and John and Edward who are deceased. She has four sisters, Eileen of Carroll, Iowa; Rita Larson of Lacona, Iowa; Virginia (Neil) Fitzmorris of Pacific Palisades, California; and Madonna Hosch of Elkader, Iowa.

Alice attended Our Lady of Good Counsel Grade and High School in Fonda graduating in 1952. She then attended Mount St. Clare College, earning an A. A. degree in 1954.

She entered the Sisters of St. Francis on September 8, 1954, and received the name Mary Jeanine at her reception on June 16, 1955. She made her first profession on August 12, 1957, and her final profession on August 12, 1960. Her novitiate classmates were Sisters Celeste Hanigan, Teresa Kunkel, Joan Theis, and Ruth Cox, and former Sisters Robert Mary (Barbara) Dwyer, Angela Marie (Patricia) Sherman, Charles Mary (Mary) Chihak, Leo Marie (Sarah) Flanagan, Helen Marie (Marguerite) Delhotal, and Elaine (Audrey) Callahan.

Sister Jeanine received a B. S. degree in Education at Barry College, Miami Shores, Florida, and a Masters degree in Religious Education from Seattle University, Seattle, Washington.

She served as an elementary teacher at St. Francis de Paula School, Chicago, Illinois, and at St. Margaret Mary School, Chino, California.

She was among the first group of Clinton Franciscans to begin teaching at Mary, Star of the Sea School, Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahama Islands, where she served for 21 years.

She served in religious education and parish ministry at St. Catherine Parish, Riverside; Holy Family Parish, Hesperia; St. Anthony Parish and Holy Rosary Parish, San Bernardino; and St. Anthony Parish, San Jacinto, all in California; at St. Augustine Parish, Peoria, Arizona; St. Patrick Parish, Clear Lake, Iowa; and St. Joachim & St. Anne Parish, Sun City, Arizona. She also served in the Diocese of Chuluchanas, Perú.

Sister Jeanine retired in 2008 in Peoria, Arizona. In July of 2010 she moved to The Canticle and then moved to The Alverno in October of 2010. She died at The Alverno on November 4, 2011

**Services for Sister Mary Jeanine Bradford  
at The Canticle**

**WAKE** Sunday, November 6, 2011  
Rosary at 4:00 P.M.;  
Scripture Service at 6:30 P.M.

**FUNERAL MASS OF HE RESURRECTION**  
Monday, November 7, 2011,  
9:30 A.M.

Presider ~ Rev. Joseph Nguyen

**BURIAL**

St. Irenaeus Cemetery, Clinton, Iowa

**The Praises of God**

God is love

God is peace

God is purity

God is comfort

God is support

God is all goodness

God is all knowing

God is all merciful

God is our strength

God is the Supreme Being

All the good things in the universe are  
a part of God.

God is our source for becoming  
what we are called to be.

God calls us to become like God  
by possessing the virtues.

God is consistent in His call to goodness  
for each human being.

Our eternal life with God in heaven  
will bring us love, joy, peace,  
fulfillment and oneness with God.

Jeanine Bradford OSF  
June 22, 2011

## Reflections at the Eucharistic Celebration of Sister Jeanine Bradford's life

There are times in life when words fall short and we reach for other creative ways to express our hearts' needs and longings. This moment of celebration of the life of Sister Jeanine is one such time! The gift is that Jeanine herself provides us with a thing of beauty that invites her life to say something to all of us who have been part of the fabric of her precious 77 years.

Among Jeanine simple possessions was this beautiful Peruvian hanging which reflects something of the mystery, beauty and power of her life—work of a Weaver God, the loom upon which her life journey was stretched and sketched.

Note the many panels, the design within each always the same, but offering variations in color and stitching that can depict the many phases of her life's journey. There are bright colored ones, radiating joy, vigor, good Irish wit and also dark-toned ones, offering glimpses of the sorrowful, painful pieces of her journey: Dark experiences that called for depth of soul at every turn.

**Black:** This is the one color that frames, accentuates, undergirds, knits together all the other colors of this tapestry: 'tis the basic thread we call Faith—the one strand Jeanine never let go of.

We hear Jesus say today, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled". You have faith in God; have faith also in Me.*" What precedes that Gospel directive is very important here: It is Jesus' question to Peter: *"You will lay down your life, will you?"* Jeanine came to understand the price of such fidelity—going all the way.—embracing the crisis and trials as entries into greater depth of being. When you encounter something from that deep place it changes you! It's this very adult/transformational kind of faith of which Jesus speaks. Richard Rohr, OFM, a Franciscan theologian, underscores the urgency when he writes: *"Those who walk the full and entire journey are the ones who have heard some deep invitation to 'something more' and set out to find it by both grace and daring."*

**Bright Green** tells of Jeanine's good Irish wit, mischievous spirit, her love of the land and her dear family. The Bradford family lived on a farm near Fonda—the seeding place for her love of earth, her green thumb and strong healthy body shaped by daily barn yard duties. Isaiah hints at this world in which Jeanine grew up: *"The earth brings forth its shoots, and a garden makes its seeds spring up"*. Here in the faith-filled Bradford home, Jeanine's young heart opened and touched into the Mystery of the living God: a God of goodness and love. This is a God who beckoned her to the "something more" to be found in the Franciscan way of life, and she set out to find it by both grace and daring. We all know that Jeanine never lost that "greening power" rooted in love of family and rich western Iowa soil.

About a year and a half ago, when I visited Rita and Jeanine in their Arizona home, Jeanine was quick to observe: *"I take care of the outdoors and Rita the indoors—she loves to cook and I love to tend the cactus plants and our rocky courtyard."* The night Jeanine breathed her last, a gorgeous orchid graced her Alverno window sill—one she had tended with care. Jan and I noted that night that this tender flower had but a single fuchsia bloom! Today that orchid with six fresh blossoms stands beside the photos that tell her life story.

**Yellow** hints of sunshine, playful spirit, love of children and Jeanine's attraction to warm sunny places. She was in the Bahamas for 21 years where, at Mary Star of the Sea grade school, she fell in love with the children, delighted in preparing them for First Eucharist, and also cultivated life-long adult friendships. In various parishes in California, she poured out her kind and heartfelt love as she struggled to teach young children, many coming from destitute homes and drug-addicted parents. Jeanine was also missioned to Peru, South America, for a couple of years: long enough to shine love on the poorest of the poor in Chulucanas and in Huarmaca in the high Andes. For her, riding a mule for hours to reach the most remote parish zones was nothing heroic, but quite ordinary for one who had a heart for simple people. In Peoria, Arizona, she concluded her long teaching career and then enjoyed a more relaxing life with her dear Sister, Rita.

Jeanine's life-long desire to contribute to the making of a better world never wavered. One day she shared these words from the journal she had written after retiring:

*"My deepest desire: To become more attentive to God's presence, deep love for me/us and God's action in my daily routine. I am my own stumbling block. I want to be able to do more than just say the words, but to permit myself to become prayer."*



We knew Jeanine as one who spoke truth as she saw it, whether the topic be politics, prayer, community life, or global realities. There was nothing “fluffy” about this woman’s convictions, passion or courage: *“How little I accept the crosses Life sends.”* she wrote recently.

**We come now to the purples, deep blues** that reflect what I’ve come to believe was Jeanine’s greatest work: letting go and surrendering: going to where she would rather not go. Her loss of memory that stripped her of the precious grounding of time and place made for a very lonely journey. It’s C.S. Lewis who writes:

*God whispers to us in our pleasures,  
Speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pain.”*

One day not long ago I shared with her this story of a four-year-old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman’s yard, climbed onto his lap and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy just said, *“Nothing, I just helped him cry.”*

We wept together, struggling to grasp the mystery of a God who not only is with us in our pain but also suffers, sits and weeps with us when *pain and terror set in.*

### **So what might be the transformative gifts flowing from such pain, struggle, surrender?**

We see how Jeanine, through unwanted change, was drawn deeper into the depths of the mystery we call God. Through her struggle, she gave witness to the realness of what we call Paschal Mystery: that cyclic movement of the human journey which is falling in love with life, daring to let go into the dark, only to experience greater fullness of life, greater resonance with God’s own heart.

I like to think that some poetic lines Jeanine penned in 1983, reflect her thirst for Divine intimacy—words that were to become a wellspring of sustenance in her darkest hours:

*You favor me with a glimpse of your life,  
which urges me to “Image” forth, and  
instinct compels me to make a tent for you.  
All within my being longs for that permanency.  
...enlarge my tent to the collective cosmic process.*

*Then the reassuring voice, “This is my Son....Listen to him.”  
Your expectations birth new hope.  
Desire initiates a constant Becoming.  
The Spirit calls me to live with the question.  
Accept Mystery.  
I “let go” realizing You can’t be contained.*



Through Jeanine’s embrace of radical vulnerability we discover another gift of unwanted change: the gift of community and family. As the need to depend on the strengths of others grows, we’re drawn closer to one another. A couple of weeks ago, when Jeanine was coming out of one of her most difficult hospital episodes and not able to eat much at all, we brought her a shake from the Dairy Queen. She insisted that the shake be shared with those present, and then she uttered this quick though labored response: *“Oh, Mary, I’m so grateful for a kind and loving community “.*

### **This brings us to the beautiful white panel:**

A few days ago one of the nurses was talking with Jeanine about her health condition and Jeanine calmly observed: *“Now I know my work is done.”*

Her beautiful tapestry completed, Jeanine now sees as God sees, and how surprised she must be by the wonders and beauty woven into her life’s fabric.

Thank you, Jeanine, for the gift of your unique and precious life. You heard the invitation to *“the something more”* and set out to find it with zest and daring.

Yes, the color and texture which you have brought into our being has become a thing of beauty--one we will treasure forever!

*Mary Smith OSF*