

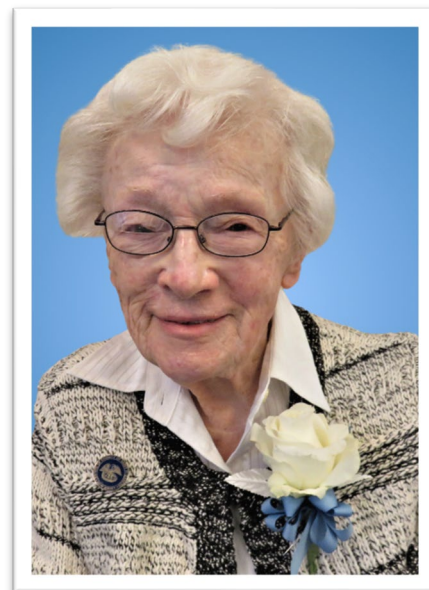
Sister John Mary Tierney, SC

Entered eternal life on February 20, 2025

Good morning, and indeed it is a very good morning as we gather in Holy Family Chapel to celebrate the long life of Sister John Mary Tierney, in her 100th year on earth and her 77th year as a Sister of Charity.

We welcome many of John Mary's family from near and far ... Jack, her brother-in-law, his son, John, nephews Frank and Andrew, and John who couldn't be here today. She is predeceased by her niece, Jo Ann. I know that John Mary enjoyed any and all occasions with family, the close-knit Tierney clan. Welcome friends of John Mary and her Sisters of Charity.

I heard recently that Sister John Mary is the only sister with that name in our Congregation's 165-year history! I heard, too, that she enjoyed the distinction! To her family she is Sister-in-law Marie, Aunt Marie and cousin Marie. I liked to call her J.M. and did so often.



This reflection is a collaboration with Sister Maryanne Van Note. We lived with John Mary at St. Bridget's Jersey City for over 30 years! In a sense it is also a collaboration with John Mary, herself, who was interviewed by a St. Elizabeth University student 8 years ago.

Marie Louise Tierney was born in Orange NJ to John and Louise Tierney. She was raised in Montclair after the death of her father. She was the oldest of three sisters; Pat and Ginny are deceased. Early on their mother instilled in her girls a love of music: "We grew up singing," John Mary said, "I carried the melody and my sisters would harmonize."

As a young girl she wanted to be a teacher. She said, "I didn't want to play house. I would dress my dolls and then I would teach them." Later, at Immaculate Conception High School in Montclair she met the Sisters of Charity. She said, "I admired them. I got to know them as friends, as women." After working for five years, she entered the Sisters of Charity in 1948.

Her early years in the classroom were in at the elementary level and in schools in Jersey City, though she first taught in St. James School in Newark. In Jersey City she ministered in the Academy of St. Aloysius, St. Paul of the Cross, Sacred Heart (Principal) and St. Anne's School as a part-time music teacher. This ministry was a highlight for her where her love of God's children converged with her passion for music. Moving in a different direction in the early 1970's she studied at Jersey City State for a master's and served as a school psychologist at A. Harry Moore, a school for students with disabilities. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, our congregation's founder and the founder of our country's Catholic school system, once said that tenderness is the language children best understand and with that tender, kind approach, John Mary shaped minds and hearts in the classroom for years on end.

In 1973, John Mary arrived at St. Bridget Convent, JC. She was a gift to us, our senior sister, a steady, gracious, active presence in a Convent that was a bit 'unconventional'! In addition to our daily ministries in schools, nearby, we opened our Convent doors to single women, pregnant women, mothers with babies, who needed a home. We were inspired by St. Vincent de Paul, one of our founders who instructed his Daughters of Charity to let their cloister be the city street, their chapel, the parish church. At that time, together, we raised a little girl whose mother died, quite suddenly. In fact, she is here today, my daughter, Adele. She is with her daughter, Zoelle, and her son, James.

John Mary was an integral part of our 'ministry of hospitality.' She gently nurtured each new mother, giving advice when asked, and she was steadfast in responding to their many and varied needs. I saved a quote on a

card that I saw many years ago that describes John Mary during those busy days. It reads, “I love people that have no idea how wonderful they are and just move around making the world a better place.” John Mary, our humble and unpretentious Sister did that, quietly, daily.

She responded to a call to teach in St. Mary High School, Jersey City, where her students appreciated and loved her. Twenty-three years later she left the classroom for good. But she volunteered in the library at Immaculate Conception High School for many years, her alma mater, coming full circle!

Many summers were spent volunteering at Maris Stella, providing the perfect balance to her educational ministries. She had the opportunity to share her musical gift there at liturgies. She treasured her time at the shore! She told a caregiver at the Motherhouse, Sister Dianne, that these summers, in addition to her time in school, made her feel ‘whole’.

When she moved to the Motherhouse in 2009, she remained active, driving sisters to appointments and monitoring the prayer board. But her health began to fail gradually, then dramatically. In and out of hospice care for several years, she lingered...albeit, peacefully. A few years ago, she moved to St. Catherine of Siena Health Care Center in Caldwell. We are beyond grateful for the excellent care that she received with the Sisters of St. Dominic. A few sisters are here today; thank you!

I will close with Sister John Mary’s words of wisdom from her interview: “Being happy is about what you do with what you have... You decide whether you want a pink day or whether you want a gray day. And sometimes the pink goes gray and sometimes the gray goes pink.”

John Mary... today, I suggest that this celebration of your life, is a **HOT PINK DAY**, the day when our Sister who carries the melody reunites with her sisters who harmonize . And heaven will be filled with sweet songs! We love you, John Mary, rest in peace, now, with Jesus, the Good Shepherd whom you followed throughout your long and loving life.

~ Sister Mary Anne Rattigan, SC