



Sister Mary Celine Laskey, SC

Entered eternal life on July 25, 2022

Thank you, Father, and the Sisters of Charity for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the family.

Clare Ann Laskey was born July 1, 1930, in Roslindale, Massachusetts to Hilary Tucker Laskey and Anna Catherine Laskey. At the time Celine was born her parents were living with her Maternal Grandmother Catherine Rowley at 40 Sherwood Street in Roslindale, MA. When Clare Ann was brought home from the hospital, she was met by her older sister Muriel, whom we all called Moo, her Uncle Dan Rowley and her cousins Francis and Henry (Dan's Sons) who were like older brothers to her. Notice I did not say that she was welcomed home by her sister Moo, as Moo was eight years old when Clare Ann was born and was quite content being an only child.

In 1932 Clare Ann's parents had another baby girl, Celine Ruth who only survived for a few days. Now I'm not sure if when Clare Ann was given her religious name of Sister Mary Celine Laskey that she had requested that Celine be part of her religious name or if the Sisters of Charity looked through her file and determined Celine would be part of her name. Either way, as we know today Celine was chosen as part of her name, and even when the time came when women religious could return to their birth names, Clare Ann kept the name Mary Celine, as it had great meaning to her.

The house at 40 Sherwood Street was a large single-family home that was converted into a two family, with Uncle Hilary, Aunt Anna, Moo, Celine, Uncle Dan, Francis and Henry living on the second and third floors and my grandparents Louis and Theresa Neal (Anna's sister) and their children Anna Maria (my mother) and her brother Gerard living on the first floor. Aunt Anna's unit was the main gathering place for the family. It was a busy house!

Growing up, Clare Ann went to Catholic schools and in addition to being exposed to women religious in school, her mother also had several friends that were nuns one of whom was Sister Elizabeth Anna, a Sister of Charity of Convent Station. For many years during my younger days, I remember Sister Elizabeth Anna coming to Roslindale for a couple of weeks every summer for her vacation.

Clare Ann entered the Sisters of Charity September 8, 1947, and from that point on she had several alias': Clare Ann, Sister Mary Celine, Celine, Mary C, Mary and Little Foot. I believe little foot came from the novices she entered with, as she had a size six shoe when she entered.

The Sisters of Charity quickly realized that Sister Celine had a special gift for caring for people that mainstream society shunned or preferred not to acknowledge. She spent much of her early years at St. Mary's Orphanage in Newark NJ, eventually being in charge of it. She worked tirelessly for the children there, doing everything possible to make sure they knew it was their home. I'm sure she spent way more time in Emergency Rooms with sick or injured children than we could ever imagine. At one point I recall she wanted to remove "Orphanage" from the name and replace it with "Home", but I do not recall if she succeeded in that mission.

Not long after Sister Celine was first sent to the orphanage, her superior summoned for her and told her that she would need to get her driver's license. Now this was back in the day when nuns did not drive. So, she took some road lessons and then the driving test and passed. She was one of the first, if not the first Sister of Charity of Convent Station to get a driver's license. The veil of the old habit (the box) proved to be a bit of a hazard when driving so a special driving veil was designed. As Celine told it, she would go out to the station wagon in her habit veil, driving veil in hand, get in, duck down across the front seat (back in the day when there were

such things as bench seats) and stick her head towards the passenger side floor, take off the habit veil, put on the driving veil and then pop her head back up, and then others could get in the station wagon. When they got to their destination, the reverse was done.

After her time at the orphanage, she worked at smaller group homes for children, again with the same passion for ensuring the children knew it was their home and doing everything she could and then some to make it a good home environment. Several summers I recall she and a couple of the staff from the group home would take the children to Cape Cod for a week or two of vacation, the same way other families did every year.

Celine's hearing began to deteriorate, the result of nerve damage, and she was told her hearing would get progressively worse. Rather than taking a "woe is me" approach to the news, Celine learned sign language and to read lips, skills that enabled her to excel when working with people with disabilities later in her missions.

Celine enjoyed music and saw an opportunity to use her love of music to work with developmentally challenged people, so she received permission from the Sisters of Charity to take courses and became certified in Music Therapy. Her plan was to use Music Therapy and work with developmentally challenged adults. Celine had to put this on hold for a while, as in 1981 her mother suffered a stroke that left her partially paralyzed. Celine returned to Boston to help Moo take care of their mother. Eventually Moo and Aunt Anna moved from the two family in Roslindale to Moo's single family ranch house in Dennisport on Cape Cod. During this time Celine became the administrator of the Catherine Mary McHale Center at Sacred Heart Convent in Newton Center for the retired Sisters of Charity from the Boston area. Celine again made sure that it was a home for the Sisters and that they knew it was their home. She planned cookouts and took small groups on various outings and still managed to get to the Cape about once a week to give Moo a break in Aunt Anna's care.

When her time as Administrator of the Catherine Mary McHale Center was over Celine worked as a Counselor for the Cooperative for Human Services in Medford, MA. Here in addition to providing a warm and caring environment for the residents she put some of her music therapy skills to work. We had a 65th birthday party for Celine at my house and the residents from the Group Home came. Let me tell you, they were the life of the party! You could see how much they loved Celine and wanted to celebrate with her. And you could see how happy she was that they were there to celebrate with her.

Celine completed her mission of working with developmentally challenged adults in the Boston area by using her Music Therapy talents at the Shore Collaborative in Everett, MA. Throughout all of her missions she put the needs of others first.

Celine had always had connections to her mother's side of the family but as happens in families there was some type of a rift on her father's side. She and Moo only had one connection to the Laskey's – Beverly Laskey – and she had moved to the mid-west. When Beverly died, she was brought back to Massachusetts for a funeral and burial. I took Moo and Celine to the Mass and cemetery, and at that point Moo had a lot of mobility issues so she was in a wheelchair. As I was helping Moo to get into the car a young woman stopped and asked if we needed help. Celine and this woman exchanged how they knew Beverly and it turned out this woman was Diane Laskey, their uncle's granddaughter. Phone numbers were exchanged and over time meetings occurred. At the time Moo and Celine were sharing an apartment in Revere, MA. Eventually Moo required more care than Celine could provide so Moo moved to Bethany Health Care Center in Framingham, MA and Celine moved in with Diane Laskey, in the home in East Boston where Celine's father had grown up. Celine was thrilled that she had a contact with the Laskey's and that she was living in her father's house. I truly believe that the Lord had a great deal to do with that chance encounter at the cemetery. We have all benefitted in having Diane be part of our lives.

I would like to thank the members of the family and close family friends that I'm aware of that tried to stay in touch with Celine, sending her cards, notes or pictures, even after she stopped using email and the phone, in particular Helen Murphy and Mary Rowley, Fran Rowley, Diane Laskey, Mary Cahalane and Kathy Metz.

A special thank you to Sister Barbara Connell, who is not here in person today. Sister Barbara, who entered the order with Celine, was the liaison for me with Celine over the past three to four years since Celine stopped using the phone. Sister Barbara made it possible for me to arrange visits with Celine at Convent Station and was my co-pilot/navigator when we went to visit Celine at St. Joseph's Rehab.

In speaking with Sister Maryanne Campeotto several times over the past few weeks, we both commented on how much better Celine made the lives of those whom society had almost cast aside. We both agreed that Celine should have entered through the gates of heaven in the speed-pass lane, not need to stop and provide reasons why she should be allowed to enter. Her work here on earth provided the explanations and then some. I pray that her suffering is over, and she is enjoying heaven and the many relatives that have gone before her, and that she has reunited with her good friends Sister Jeanette (formerly Sister Evelyn), Sister Dorothy Mastrian (formerly Sister Patrice) and Sister David from the Orphanage.

Thank you again Father and Sister Maryanne for giving me this opportunity to reflect on Sister Celine's life and thank you to the Sisters of Charity for seeing that Celine was well cared for during the past few years.

God Bless you Mary C.

Neal Murray
Nephew of Sister Mary Celine