



**Eulogy of Sister C. Jean (Catherine Jean) Hayen, BVM**  
Caritas Studio, Jan. 12, 2021

It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister C. Jean Hayen.

“I plan to live each moment with trust in our loving God as I respond to the needs of our time with the insights, graces, and abilities I have.” Jean made this statement during an interview in 2010. It beautifully expresses her love of God and her mission to live a life of loving service.

Judith Rae Hayen was born on Sept. 2, 1942, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to Joseph and Mildred (Weis) Hayen. She joined two sisters, Mary Helen and Joanne “Joni,” and was followed by siblings Linda, William “Bill,” and Margaret. Her parents held the deep conviction that God loves all creation and were deeply committed to fulfilling the needs of others. Over a 10-year period, they were foster parents for 70 children. After becoming BVM Associates in 1982, they diligently took actions for justice suggested by the 8th Day Center for Justice. As the saying goes, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

Judi’s early interests were many: sewing (she won a prize for her green plaid wool suit), singing in her parish choir and school’s glee club, speech, student government, and sodality. She was a dedicated member of Camp Fire Girls, which piqued her interest in cooking and gardening. She served as Bluebird assistant leader and received Camp Fire’s highest honor—Torch Bearer. For her service component, she assisted at day camp and volunteered at a cerebral palsy center. She also received the Marian Award, the highest Catholic award given to girls in programs like Camp Fire Girls and Girl Scouts. Yet, amid her numerous activities and recognitions, the call to religious life only grew stronger.

Judi attended St Patrick grade school and high school in Cedar Rapids, where she was taught by the BVMs. “I experienced [their] Christ-like love for one another, their concern for God’s people especially the poor and marginalized, and their joyfulness and prayerful commitment to our love God . . . I knew I had been touched by God’s steadfast love and that my joy would be in living life as a BVM.” Judi entered the congregation on July 31, 1960, and received the name Catherine Jean at her reception on Feb. 2, 1961. Jean professed first vows on Feb. 2, 1963, and lived 60 years as a BVM.

After profession, she completed a bachelor of science degree with a major in biology and a minor in science education from Mundelein College in Chicago.

Jean was missioned as a junior high teacher at Mary, Queen of Heaven in Cicero, Ill.; St. Patrick in Cedar Falls, Iowa; St. Paul in Davenport, Iowa; and St. Anthony in Dubuque, Iowa. “Each ministry has been enriching and challenging. A special joy was science teaching,” she shared. And she was a fantastic science teacher.

In 1972, Jean completed a master of arts in teaching (MAT) from St. Mary’s College in Winona, Minn. For her master’s project, she designed an experiment-based K-8 science curriculum. She implemented that curriculum at both St. Paul in Davenport and St. Anthony in Dubuque. The president of the St. Paul school board wrote, “The success of our students in recent Quad City Science Fairs is evidence of how they have benefited from your advanced studies and of the fine rapport you have with them . . . Your expertise in this chosen field is a true sign

of dedication to your profession.” In 1979, Jean was named an Outstanding Science Teacher by the Quad Cities Science and Engineering Fair and received the Excellence in the Teaching of Junior High Science award from the Iowa Academy of Science.

After 22 years in teaching, Jean completed a gerontology certificate program and then served as the administrator of the Visitation Convent in Dubuque, which housed sisters from several area congregations. “I loved my time there,” noted Jean. Prior to her last year at Visitation, she completed a management certificate program and began working part-time organizing volunteers for the Dubuque Housing Initiative, later known as the Heartland Housing Initiative (HHI). The following year, she became its resident services coordinator. Besides securing grant funding, she assisted residents in assessing their needs, setting goals, and accessing resources for education, job-training, parenting, and budgeting skills. “It was humbling for me to experience their hope and courage in the midst of sometimes overwhelming obstacles,” she commented. In 1996, HHI received the Iowa Governor’s Volunteer Award. Jean was honored to accept the award on its behalf.

In 1996, Jean’s long-held desire to minister to her BVM sisters at Mount Carmel became a reality. For the next 24 years, she assisted in activities, provided low-vision and auditory impairment services, volunteered with Sister Support Services and taught T’ai Chi Chih at the Roberta Kuhn Center. All the while, she continued to advocate for social justice on multiple fronts.

In 2001, Jean gave the invocation reflection for the tour of seven Dubuque properties purchased and renovated to provide affordable housing. For over 30 years, she was active with Bread for the World and encouraged others to call on political leaders to support legislation to end hunger. With an intense passion for the Earth and its care, she participated in marches and supported making Mount Carmel a bottled water free zone. Not surprisingly, she enjoyed the beauty of nature while eating meals outdoors and walking along the Mississippi River and in the Mines of Spain. For Jean, every day was Earth Day and Earth Day was a holy day!

Jean was a very spiritual and prayerful person who deepened her relationship with God by seeking quiet retreats. She enjoyed the spiritual writings of Jesuit James Martin and inspirational books by former First Lady Michelle Obama, along with mysteries, historical works, and current events. She also liked to do word and jigsaw puzzles and watch Wheel of Fortune and movies. *The Sound of Music* was her favorite because “it invites me to live life to the full with music, hope, and spiritual enrichment.”

Sharing God’s love for all was Jean’s greatest desire, but it was not always easy. Injuries and illnesses through the years presented their challenges; nonetheless she trusted in God and found strength in the people with whom God gifted her life.

It is written in the book of the Prophet Isaiah, “Do not be afraid . . . I have called you by your name, you are mine. Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up” (Isaiah 43:1-2). In her Five Wishes, Jean wrote, “My sincere thanks to all whom have helped me in the ‘sea of life.’ All I ask is that you remember me as loving you.”

In that same 2010 interview, Jean said with confidence, “God has never failed to show me the path to fullness of life and God will not fail me now.” After weeks of ups and downs, Jean requested hospice and once more placed her trust in God. Indeed, God did not fail her, but carried her home, where she is healed and whole and joyfully reunited with her parents, her sister Linda, and all her deceased relatives, BVM sisters, and friends.

Well done, Jean, good and faithful servant. Rest well in God’s love.