



Sister Mary Yarger

BORN: April 1949

ENTERED CONGREGATION: September 3, 1967

DIED: May 3, 2024

Mary was the oldest of seven children of James and Marilyn (Stewart) Yarger. Mary's brothers Ransom, Claren, Kenny and Donald (deceased) and her sisters Donna and Linda grew up in Pala, California, where their father worked in road construction and managed a more than 50-acre orange grove. Today the family continues to manage the orange groves and they, like their father, have another full-time job! They are also members of the Luiseno Tribe. Their Native American heritage and their Catholic faith ground them in their beliefs and actions. James Yarger was the patriarch of the family and Marilyn was very much the matriarch, being very clear about what each one needed to do and how to do it.

Most of Mary's life was in education — elementary and secondary as a teacher and principal, and as an external evaluator for school accreditation. Mary found the time she spent at her elementary school, Mission San Antonio de Pala, and her high school, San Luis Rey Academy, especially satisfying. She found assisting students who came after her in both schools to be an honor. This was especially true because she taught kids and grandkids of students she went to school with. She taught them the school curriculum. They learned that, as well as that she cared for them, telling them, "I know you can do better than that. After all, I went to school with your grandparents. I know you can make something of yourself if you want." Then there was the ultimate incentive — Mary went to visit their grandparents; no Native American child wanted to disappoint their grandparent!

Later, being administrator of Sherman Indian High School — the school her grandmother graduated from and where her grandparents married and worked and the place of the birth of their children — Mary found Sherman to be very important to her. Those family member pictures hung in Mary's office as a reminder of the greatness of Sherman to her and to her family. Mary was the third generation

at Sherman.

Again, Mary did more than ensure good curriculum for the students at Sherman. Many of those students were in the boarding school and, as any parent knows, teenagers are hungry and eat a lot. Mary secured grants to provide healthy snacks and favorite meals such as tacos and Indian fry bread. She fed and nourished their mind and their body.

Mary received numerous certificates: Advanced Liturgical Formation programs, the Leadership Institute from the Bureau of Indian Education, the Notre Dame High School 2008 and 2009 "Kiss the Pig" Fundraiser, Supporting Student Success at All Tribes American Indian Charter School, the Guadalupe Award from the San Bernardino diocese, a science education award from the San Diego Diocese and many, many more — I decided to stop listing the awards so we wouldn't be here all day!

Mary expressed her gratitude to the Congregation for the blessings she received as a member. The friendships developed over the years that sustained her through the many events of her life. She said, "Life is not meant to be easy; it is a gift of grace for each of us. Some we receive during good times and much more during hard times."

Mary was grateful to all the Sisters who blessed her life. When she had lung surgery here in Ohio in 2014 and, in her words, when she really did not know long she would be in this world, she could literally physically and emotionally feel the prayer of our Sisters, especially the "old nuns." She continued to gratefully feel those prayers these past two years. Cards, texts and phone calls brightened her days.

On Mary's application to the Congregation, to the question "Why do you want to be a Sister of the Precious Blood?" Mary responded, *I want to serve the people and to love God.*

In 1979, when Mary professed final vows, she stated, *By the grace of God, I*

profess to God my vow of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Sister of the Precious Blood forever.

In 2011, when Mary was nominated to congregational leadership, she affirmed by saying, *if God wills, I am willing.* She served as councilor and vocation ministry coordinator, meeting folks, planning vocation materials, giving talks and carrying out many aspects of the ministry of congregational leadership.

Throughout her life, Mary served the people and loved God. She was faith-filled and determined in speaking the truth. She spoke the truth to priests and bishops, calling them to respect and to ministry especially to the Native American people. A little more than a year ago, Mary attended a meeting with the bishop of San Diego. She arrived with her list of 16 things he could do for the good of the people. She may not have used the most polite words, but she did get her points across.

Mary expressed her love and respect for our Sisters by attending funerals including her family traditions, her CPPS spirit, her call from God to cherish life and express gratitude — or is it all of those because Mary is all of those aspects.

Mary chose to come to Dayton for this Mass of the Resurrection and her burial here with her Sisters who affirmed her for so many years of ministry in California.

Mary Faye, Brenda and I, who came to this Congregation on September 3, 1967, we like all of you rejoice with Mary . . .

*Praise God, the Father and the Son,
and Holy Spirit, three in One
Eternal praise, unending sung,
praise God!*

With the refrain of this hymn that she thoroughly enjoyed, she will continue to give praise to her God for all eternity.

— Sister Judy Kroeger