

Mary Katheryn Behnke, OFS

Our sister in Christ, Mary Behnke, embraced Sister Death on Wednesday, April 6th. She was 89 years old. Mary was professed a Secular Franciscan on March 9, 1997 and served on the San Luis Rey Fraternity council as Treasurer from 2000 to 2003. She is survived by five of her seven children, by fourteen grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren. She is interred at Holy Cross Cemetery in Chula Vista.

Mary was a devout Catholic and an enthusiastic Franciscan who volunteered, participated, helped and befriended people in the fraternity, at her parish and at every personal encounter. She was bright, brave and resourceful, a woman with a kind smile and a fine sense of humor.



YOUTH & CAREER: Mary Classon came into the world the day the stock market Crash of '29 launched the Great Depression. After graduating college, Mary married Raymond Behnke. The couple lived in Wisconsin through the birth of their first baby, Vincent. With better job opportunities in California, they soon moved west. Over the next eight years, the couple brought six more children into the world: a girl and five boys, including twins. The responsibility was beyond what Raymond could handle, and he left the household when the youngest was nine.

Now the sole support of her family, Mary took a full-time position at UCSD as a manager of student housing. Weekends, she worked in a snack bar at a nearby park and brought her school-age children along. Mary wanted a normal, happy childhood for her children. She took the family camping and eventually bought a dune buggy for joy riding in the desert. During high school, the five youngest all played football. Not surprisingly, their mother was at every game. Always a practical person, Mary taught her children to cook, so they would eat well while she was at work.

RETIREMENT: Once retired, Mary became very active in her parish and made many friends. During this time, she joined the Secular Franciscan Order, and became a vital part of the San Luis Rey Fraternity. A woman of considerable talent and wisdom, she was always kind. Routinely driving members to meetings, cooking for potlucks, and serving as Council Treasurer, Mary was a beloved member of our community. For twenty-two years, she served as a volunteer at the Escondido Senior Center.

At home, Mary had many visitors: her children and grandchildren kept a close eye on her, regularly dropping by her apartment to take her to lunch or brunch and to bring her little presents. She took part in family Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations, and attended countless bridal and baby showers. More recently, as trips to the Mission became too arduous, Mary drove only to Mass and for local shopping trips. She shared her apartment with Pearl, a lively and well cared for miniature poodle. As Mary moved on to assisted living, she found Pearl a loving and active family with a big yard.

Mary liked everything at her assisted living facility: the staff was kind, the food was good, and a lovely tree grew just outside her window. She thanked God for finding her a great place and good care. In January 2018 Mary was hospitalized with the flu. After returning home, she weakened and her short-term memory was impaired. In the early hours of April 6th, having received the Sacrament of the sick, Mary died peacefully.

Her son Tim was holding her hand.