



## Sister Mary Joan Cook

February 13, 2013

SISTER MARY JOAN COOK, RSM, Ph.D. (Joan K. Cook) of West Hartford died Wednesday (Feb. 13, 2013) in the Baggot Street Community at Saint Mary Home, West Hartford, on February 13, 2013. Born in New Rochelle, New York, she was the daughter of the late William O. and Mary E. (Sullivan) Cook. She graduated from Mount Saint Joseph Academy and Saint Joseph College and received advanced degrees from Boston College and the University of Toronto. She entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1947 and taught in Saint Patrick and Saint Joseph Schools in Hartford, Saint Peter School in Danbury and Saint Mary High School in Greenwich before joining the English Department at Saint Joseph College, now the University of Saint Joseph, where she remained for nearly 50 years, retiring as Faculty Emerita. She took a sabbatical to serve as Dean of Studies at Loralton Hall in Milford for two years. After retiring from teaching, Sister served as an academic advisor in The Weekend College and volunteer in the College Archives. Recently, she authored the history of the first 75 years of Saint Joseph College entitled *Saint Joseph College 1932-2007: The Art of Becoming in a Changing Society*. Sister Mary Joan is fondly remembered by the College alumnae for her personal interest in their success, her generous sharing of her time and knowledge, and her literary and dramatic talents in the *Queene's Company*. Sister Mary Joan guided the baccalaureate degree programs for several Sisters from India and Africa and remained in contact with them following their graduation. The Sisters who lived with her in the Lourdes Community at Saint Joseph College were inspired by her generosity, kindness, intellectual acumen and faith-filled life. She was much loved and recognized by her nieces and nephews as a wisdom figure, a guiding light who created beauty with her presence. A long-standing active member of the Sisters of Mercy Justice Committee and a woman of many interests, Sister Mary Joan could be found enthusiastically viewing the Kentucky Derby, cheering the UCONN Women's Basketball Team or enjoying an opera at the Bushnell with her friends. Aunt Nancy, a name given by her younger brother, is survived by several nieces and nephews and their families and the Sisters of Mercy Community. She was predeceased by her sisters, Mary O. Bidwell, Jane G. Murphy, and Edna K. Hammond, and her brothers, William O. Cook and Rev. John P. Cook.

Calling hours are Wednesday from 2:00-5:00PM in the chapel of St. Mary Home, 2021 Albany Ave., West Hartford. A Mass of the Resurrection will follow at 6:30PM in the Connor Chapel of the University of St. Joseph. Burial will be in St. Mary Cemetery on Thursday at 9:00AM. Those wishing to make a donation in Sister Mary Joan Cook's memory are asked to consider the Sisters of Mercy, 55 East Cedar Street, Newington, CT 06111 or the University of Saint Joseph, 1678 Asylum Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117. Taylor & Modeen Funeral Home has care of arrangements. For directions and online condolences, please visit [www.taylorandmodeen.com](http://www.taylorandmodeen.com).

# Comments

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“ Such a woman of quiet brilliance and wit and wisdom. I was a freshman at Saint Joseph College, West Hartford CT in 1974 and had heard that taking a class with her would be very hard. Here I was a young woman away from home for the first time and fearful of what college would bring. What I found was a teacher in Sister Joan who encouraged my writing to develop my own voice and style. To this day, I love writing and think about my days at SJC with caring and giving teachers like her. One of the upperclass women warned me about taking her class. Whether local legend or myth, I was told Sister Joan's grading criteria was in her own words were: "A is for God. B is for me and C is for you." Even with the imagined fear that I would do no better than a "C" I took her class. And what a glorious class it was. I reveled in everything she introduced me to and in the end my grade - which I had stopped thinking about - was "something between God and her!" Thank you, Sister Joan for giving me the confidence to move forward through my fears and to always embrace the unknown knowledge that awaits me around the bend.

Joyce Murray Sullivan - Yonkers, NY - Student at Saint Joseph College - June 28, 2015 at 12:00 AM

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“ For well over half a century, Sister Mary Joan's life and mine have been interwoven. We entered the Sisters of Mercy on the same day, did our first teaching assignments at Saint Patrick's School in Hartford, and became true colleagues in the same department, English, at Saint Joseph College (Univ. of Saint Joseph) in West Hartford where we taught together for many years. I remember her as a quiet, studious woman of great integrity and determination. Her sense of humor was delightful and contagious, although sometimes it was just a twinkle in her eye and a tiny smile on her lips that betrayed her hidden amusement. Sister Mary Joan was a woman of compassion, often praying and acting on behalf of those in need of mercy and kindness. She was a woman of peace and prayer; everyone who knew her knew that.

As a professor of English, Sister was the epitome of excellence. She brought careful precision to her knowledge and freely shared her deep wisdom with students and colleagues.

The long year of her debilitating illness caused her many difficulties and indignities. She bore them all with patience and love.

Barbara A. Kathe, Ph.D. - Newport, RI - long-time friend - February 24, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ What a soul she is! I think of her as a woman of wisdom, kindness, and a wordsmith. She had the ability to say and to write down a few words that were filled with much meaning and further reflection. Such words she sent to me when I moved to Texas. I remember her as a woman of prayer. In quiet times in Lourdes Hall I remember her walking up and down the hall praying the Rosary. She was always so helpful to me when I was privileged to celebrate Mass in the Lourdes Chapel. Thank you Mary Joan.

**Rev. Charles Topper - Corpus Chrisit, TX, TX - Friend and Colleague** - February 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ It was wonderful to meet 'you' - her family over the past year. Being part of this amazing family gave her much joy and strength. She told me that her most memorable moments in her life was being with her siblings - spending time with them in their homes. She reached out to many people with love and kindness, but she kept in her heart a special place for her family. Her eyes would light up when she spoke about them, even in the final months of her life. God bless you and may you find peace knowing that you were deeply loved by this wonderful woman and saint.

Much love to you, Lisa

**Elisabeth Rose Wilds (Lisa) - Forest Hills, NY & (Ivoryto, NY - student & friend** - February 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ I had the good fortune to take over two of Sr. Mary Joan's classes several years ago. She couldn't have been more generous or helpful to me at that time. Later, when I taught in the adult learners program, she was always available to me. She was a good listener with a quick wit that sometimes surprised me. Sr. Mary Joan was always compassionate. A woman of quiet strength, she was to me, the ideal sister of Mercy. Her legacy will remain forever indelible.

**Mary Ann Gauthier - Chatham, MA** - February 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ Sr. Mary Joan was my colleague when I taught history for 23 years at the College. She was a kind, intelligent, supportive person, a faculty member who taught English but also had an enduring interest in the subject of history. She published an article on local history in Perspectives, the newsmagazine of the American Historical Association, that was subsequently anthologized in History Anew: Innovations in the Teaching of History, before the publication of her book, Saint Joseph College, 1932-2007. In addition to her achievements as a writer and effective teacher, I remember her with admiration as a thoughtful, understanding, and remarkable guide to so many students.

**Barbara E. Lacey - Willimantic, CT** - February 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ Your friendly and welcoming smile has meant a lot to me. You always had the time to chat for a minute or two. I have missed you working away in your small office as I go to class in Lourdes, but you have left a strong impression on me of a woman who enjoyed all that life had to offer and could still focus on doing more for those whose needs were greater.

May you enjoy all that you have earned in this life in your next life. You will be missed by those you leave behind and welcomed by those who have prepared the way for you. God speed!

Barbara

**Barbara Henriques - Chicopee, MA - Faculty Member at the University** - February 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ She will be remembered for her wonderful work at Saint Joseph College. She was a blessing for all of us at Saint Joseph College. May she shine her light and love on Saint Joseph College forever.

**Beth Flannery - Boston, MA - Saint Joseph College Graduate 93** - February 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ The Kazibwe's family love you and you will never be forgotten! and your family including Edner, and father.  
I am sure Sister Clare is happy to see you join all the angles and you are friends again and family.

Please Sister Mary, Keep praying for me as always.

With much Love,

Berna. your doughter.

**Bernadette Kazibwe - Colchester, CT - Friend and mother** - February 20, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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“ I will never forget Sister Mary Joan cook. she was my second mother when I left my mother back in Uganda. she was there for all my sad and happy days.  
May God keep her with his angles so she can keep watching over me and praying for us as she has always done before. I real miss her. I love you Sister Mary Joan. You know that very well.

**Bernadette Kazibwe - Colchester, CT - second mother** - February 20, 2013 at 12:00 AM