

## *“A Great Lady”*

Sister Claude Marie Crinnion, SHF

Entered into eternal life December 8, 2008

“She was -- *is* -- a great lady,” said Sister Angela Marie Hinckley of her friend, Sister Claude Marie Crinnion, who died after a long struggle with illness on December 8, 2008, at the Holy Family Motherhouse in Fremont.

Sister Claude, born Loretta Rosamund Crinnion in 1925, entered the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1958, and celebrated her golden jubilee this year. During her 50 years of service, she was assigned to parishes throughout the Oakland Diocese, as well as in the diocesan Religious Education offices in Oakland and Monterey.

She also served in Congregational ministry as a Regional Coordinator and as the Director of Community Life Development, an office she pioneered to help older sisters deal with the changes brought on by retirement.

Sister Claude was missioned to Utah in 1995, where she worked for one year as Program Director of the Social and Aging Ministry (SAM) of Catholic Community Services. She then went to St. Ambrose in Salt Lake City, where she continued in a similar ministry, working with the elderly and with volunteers who served the elderly.

She returned to Oakland in 1999 saying, “My life has come full circle; I will be taking an administrative role in the parish in which I grew up, St. Margaret Mary’s Parish.”

Sister Claude returned to Salt Lake City for one year during her retirement, living with Sister Angela Marie. “She was an angel helping with my sisters,” said Sister Angela Marie of that time. “She sat with my sister, Mary, at the burial of my sister, Maureen. Before Sister Claude left Utah, she helped me clean out the convent with its 30 years of collected stuff.”

“We entered at the same time,” said Sister Laetitia Rossi. “We had even been riding on the same bus and came up the stairs at 890 Hayes Street in San Francisco (our Motherhouse then) at the same time. Sister Claude was older than the rest of us and had work experience and was so much more mature and serious. We must have seemed like kids to her.”

“But because she was older, entering the convent was more of a sacrifice for her,” Sister Laetitia continued.

“Claude and I became good friends right away,” said Sister Angela Marie. “We were both older, we both had careers before we entered, we both liked martinis. We spent vacations together, traveled together -- she was a great friend.”

“I remember when she started Community Life Development,” said Sister Karen Stern. She started retirement parties, jubilarian parties and workshops for pre-retirement. I was sorry when she left that position.”

“She was a wonderful cook,” continued Sister Karen. “I remember one Thanksgiving in Utah when I went to her place for dinner. She was living in an apartment that was a converted carriage house, and had just a tiny narrow kitchen. But Sister Claude cooked a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner -- and she made Tiramisu!”

“Sister Claude grew a lot through her suffering; she has not had an easy time of it,” said Sister Joan of Arc Rodrigues, who also entered the Sisters of the Holy Family with Sister Claude. “There was one long siege where she spent 54 days without going downstairs, with just one thing after another.

When I asked the group I was interviewing if there was anything else they wanted to say, Sister Angela Marie said, “Sister Claude loved to garden, and her dream was to have a raised plot in the courtyard that she could take care of from her wheelchair. She just never got well enough.

“We had our differences,” Sister Angela Marie continued, “and we had some great arguments, but we always worked through them. I think that’s why we were such good friends.”

Sister Carol Crater