



## All of Which Woman Is Capable

### A Silent Messenger

*How beautiful are the hands and feet of those who spread the message of the kingdom of God,* paraphrases the silent and powerful work of Sister Joan Gloistein in her 48 years of ministry in working with the deaf and hard of hearing.

Joan belongs to an elite and exclusive CSJ group, of only a few sisters associated with the deaf and hard of hearing ministry in the LA province. Among those still living are Sisters Thomas Mary Collins and Dennis Mary McFadden.

Historically, the CSJ foundation in the new world was based on the need for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. In 1835, St. Louis Bishop Rosati forwarded a request to Mother St. John Fontbonne to send sisters to teach the deaf in his diocese. After training, Sister Celestine Pommerel and Sister St. John Fournier opened St. Joseph's Institute for the Deaf in the primitive log cabin at

Carondelet, St. Louis. Years passed, and schools in Oakland California and San Francisco were established

for sisters to conduct religious education classes for Catholics attending Berkeley's California State School for the deaf and in surrounding parishes.

Joan's dynamic influence in teaching the deaf and hard of hearing began in a roundabout way. Her early years of religious life began in teaching lower grades in elementary school. It was the time when the traditional CSJ religious habit was worn, and fair to say, she, (as an unnamed source said), was the "human embodiment of a nun doll" and she was exuberant and fun. She captivated her young charges. Through exposure to teaching religion after school to the deaf and hard of hearing youngsters and with Sister Thomas Mary Collins as mentor, her interest in that work was awakened.

However, she first spent a few years at Mount St. Mary's College as an instructor in the Credential and Social Service Departments.

Later, a Master's Degree in Deaf Communication from San Francisco State University began her forty-eight years of direct ministry to the deaf and hard of hearing. She has taught sign language to seminarians and priests in California and Oregon, served as a consultant in many

dioceses and parishes, and presided at international conferences in Washington DC and New Orleans, received a Pastoral Worker of the Year Award in 1983. She has co-authored a four-year series of religion lessons for teaching the deaf and hard of hearing children, a series still in use.

Joan still continues doing all that a woman is capable of doing; she has taught classes in American Sign Language to teen-age girls for the past 17 years at San Francisco's Mercy High School, where she and her students enjoy a reciprocated deep affection. Successful alumnae include a certified interpreter in San Francisco, a future teacher of deaf children, and another student pursuing a career as a court interpreter.

Sister Joan truly is a messenger who speaks eloquently through the *sounds of silence.* ☪

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*Written by Teresa Ann Coronas, CSJ*