



Joan Van Leeuwen SL
April 19, 1923 — June 19, 2010

Joan Van Leeuwen was born in St. Paul, Kansas. When Joan was 19, she moved to Wichita, Kansas. Joan wrote, " I have had two jobs since moving, have traveled on vacation and have had a wonderful European trip. I enjoy meeting people and my hobbies are photography and art." Prior to entering the Community, Joan worked at the Coleman Company, manufactures of furnaces and picnic supplies. She also worked at Kansas Gas and Electric Company and later was employed as an IBM keypunch operator.

On May 31, 1961, Joan followed her sister, Rosemund to Loretto and was received and took the name Sr. Gemma Marie. After pronouncing her first vows, Joan moved to the House of Studies in St. Louis where she worked at the Office of Congregation Relations, the fund-raising arm of the Congregation. She then moved to the Motherhouse where she was Procurator – the person who purchases items that were needed. Her next job at the Motherhouse was as maintenance and overseer of the Motherhouse farm.

In 1978, Joan moved to Denver and became bookkeeper at the Loretto Staff Office. In 1981, she coordinated the maintenance at St. Mary's Academy. A whole new world opened for Joan when in 1990 she began working at Hospice of Peace – at that time affiliated with Catholic Charities. Joan was trained as a Certified Nursing Assistant as well as a companion to those who were dying. She worked at Hospice of Peace for five years and then moved to Vista Care Hospice. During her work in Hospice care, Joan received many expressions of gratitude from families of her Hospice clients.

When she retired, Joan continued to develop artistic skills she learned during her

life. She enjoyed making things from clay, and, for the past years, her woodcarvings have delighted all of us. Joan received many awards and honors for magically turning a piece of wood into something beautiful and whimsical.

Friends were important to Joan. She was happy to do house sitting – particularly if the house had a dog living in it. She was a fierce Bronco and Rockies fan and defended them even when they lost. .

Think of a kaleidoscope and look at Joan's life noticing the many brightly colored facets — her family, Loretto, her devotion to angels, to Mary, and her love of dogs and other creatures, of nature, friends, and her artistic talents. We will remember and be grateful for your life with us, Joan — your generous, loving spirit touched all of us.