



## Mary Josephine Gleason Fennessy

February 7, 1936 - April 24, 2019

Mary Josephine Gleason Fennessy, 83, passed away on April 24, 2019 at her home in Summerfield, Florida after a long illness. She was surrounded by Thomas Fennessy, her husband of 56 years and devoted caretaker over the course of her illness, and two of her sons, John and Stephen. In the weeks before her death, each of her six children made the trip to Florida to say goodbye to the woman who was their fiercest protector and their greatest champion.

Born in Auburn, New York, on February 7, 1936, Mary-Jo was the oldest child of John and Belle Gleason. From her parents she inherited a profound faith in God, an abiding concern for her fellow man and woman, and a love for a good party. A graduate of East High School and Nazareth College, Mary-Jo's professional life was spent in social services, helping families, and especially children in need. In second grade, she first met Tom Fennessy at St. Alphonsus School. The two married in 1962 at St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn and the reception was held in the back yard of her childhood home on North Seward Avenue, where she and Tom would eventually return to raise their six children, who to this day vigorously debate which of them she considered to be her favorite. Mary-Jo taught her children more than they could possibly enumerate, so let's just go with this: Be kind. For God's sake!

Mary-Jo loved Broadway musicals, sweet wine, coffee, mystery novels,

bridge, visiting with friends, calls from her kids, Bailey's Irish Cream, rhubarb pies, her vegetable garden, and just being in the woods. She had no use for email but instead wrote letters to her friends, to her relatives, to her children. She was a steadfast friend and an active listener. She loved to laugh. You could not put one over on her. She prayed every day for all of us. She will be remembered by her husband as "the grandest lady I ever met" and by her children as simply the best mom ever.

Mary-Jo is survived by her loving husband, Tom Fennessy; their six children, Karen (John) Rabish, Joseph (Mary Lee), Thomas, Stephen (Christy), Christine (Keith Plunkett), and John; seven grandchildren; one great-grandson; and a sister, Katherine. Her brother, Thomas Gleason, predeceased her in 1943.

A Mass of remembrance will be celebrated in Mary-Jo's memory at St. Alphonsus Church at a date to be determined. Sad songs will not be permitted. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Mary-Jo's name to Hospice of Marion County , Alzheimer's Foundation of America , or SmileTrain .

Arrangements entrusted to Beyers Funeral Home and Crematory, Lady Lake, FL.

# Tribute Wall

HN

“ Dear Tom & children,  
You have our deepest condolences in the passing of Mary Jo. I didn't know you had moved to FL and that Mary Jo had suffered so much. I'll always remember my good times with her when we were young women...such a great person. Will pray for all of you...to give you strength to get thru this very, very sad time. With love & sympathy, Helen (Martin) & John Noz

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**Helen Martin Noz** - April 29, 2019 at 12:16 PM

JZ

“ Mary Jo and I were first cousins, baby friends - 3 of us born in 1936 to three Steigerwald sisters. Frances, Josephine and Belle. We spent many good times together when we were girls when I visited Auburn. We saw each other over the years during family get togethers, Carolann's cottage in Thousand Isand State Park and other events. I shall miss her as a friend and loyal cousin.  
Judith Dermody Zangas

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**Judith Dermody Zangas** - April 28, 2019 at 04:26 PM

AC

“ I had the pleasure of working with Mary Jo in Social Services for years. She was truly a special lady, who was loved by all that knew her. A straight shooter that told it the way it was, but filled with kindness and compassion. (...and you are spot on describing her! I can hear her now, Just be kind for God's sake!) My thoughts and prayers are with you all, and I have no doubt she is looking down on all of you smiling and proud of the family she helped create!

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**Angela Criazzo** - April 26, 2019 at 10:34 AM

BC

“ Tom,

*Brian and I are so sorry to hear of Mary Jo's passing. Sending prayers and heartfelt sympathy to you and your family.*

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**Brian and Monica Crawford** - April 26, 2019 at 09:16 AM

LP

“ *One other note...I always laugh when I think of Mary Jo trying to get on the highway. I remember her consistently stopping on the on ramp so she could enter comfortably. I aged years driving with her but am so glad for the memory... Lisa*

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**Lisa Prieve** - April 25, 2019 at 02:41 AM

LP

“ *Tom, Karen, Joe, Tom, Steve, Chris, John: Your mom was one-of-a-kind and her loss is felt far and wide. My heart is with you all.*  
*Lisa Prieve*

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**Lisa Prieve** - April 25, 2019 at 02:39 AM

MD

“ *When Mary-Jo's son, Steve, and my daughter, Christy, married in 2003, Mary-Jo and I became friends and family. She will be missed by all who loved her. My deepest sympathy to all her wonderful family.*

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**Mauryne Van Dusen** - April 24, 2019 at 08:11 PM