

## ***Sister Jean (Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM) Papers 1960-2006, undated***

**Creator:** Jean Dolores Schmidt (1919-2025)

**Extent:** 0.5 linear feet (1 box)

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago. Please contact [wlarchives@luc.edu](mailto:wlarchives@luc.edu) regarding use.

### **Administration Information**

**Access Restrictions:** None

**Usage Restrictions:** None

**Preferred Citation:** Item, date of item, Box #, Folder #, Sister Jean (Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM) Papers, Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago.

**Provenance:** This material was donated by Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt. No other provenance information is available (WLA2009.19).

**Processor:** Kat Latham, 2009

**Processing Information:** Finding aid updated December 2025. Finding aid updated by Kate Douglas, February 2026.

**Separations:** None

**See Also:** The Mundelein College Paper Records at the Women and Leadership Archives; Archive-It Digital Collection: Sister Jean 2018 March Madness; Mundelein College Oral History Project

### **Biographical Sketch**

Dolores Bertha Schmidt was born on August 21, 1919, to Joseph and Bertha Schmidt in San Francisco, California. She joined the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVMs) in 1937 as a postulant and was officially received into the order on March 19, 1938, taking the religious name Sister Jean Dolores. Sister Jean earned her BA at Mt. St. Mary College in Los Angeles (now Mt. St. Mary's University) in 1949 and her MA at Loyola University, Los Angeles (now Loyola Marymount University), in 1961. After several years as a teacher at elementary schools, including St. Vincent in Chicago, St. Bernard in Los Angeles, St. Charles in North Hollywood, and as principal at St. Brendan in Los Angeles, she accepted a position at Mundelein College teaching in the Education Department. She also worked in the role of Assistant Director of the BVM Scholasticate.

In the summer of 1961, Sister Jean began teaching college courses at Mundelein College. Until 1967, she taught early education courses in various subjects. She also served as the Director of the Reading Clinic and Supervisor of Student Teaching. From 1967 to 1969, she served as Assistant Dean. In 1970, she was promoted to the acting Dean of the College and served for two years. She was affectionately known as “Jean the Dean” and offered advice and compassion to the students. Throughout her long career at Mundelein College, Sister Jean, at various times, also served as Director of Summer Sessions, Associate Dean, and Director of Academic Services, Director of Coffey Hall, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, Director of Weekend College, and Director of Academic Advising. As per her dedication, she often worked dual and sometimes triple roles.

She remained on staff with Loyola University Chicago after the affiliation with Mundelein College in 1991 as Assistant Dean and Director of the TAF Program. She served an important role as a skilled and persistent administrator who served as a significant bridge in facilitating the affiliation of the schools. As Sister Jean was about to retire in 1994 at the age of 75, she was called on to help student athletes keep up their grades so that they could continue playing their sports. In that same year, she began serving as chaplain to Loyola’s athletic teams, including the men’s basketball team. Two years later, she transitioned from academic advisor to official team chaplain for the basketball team. She would support and cheer on the student athletes in many ways, including leading pre-game prayers and offering advice. After games, she sent detailed, complimentary emails to each player.

Sister Jean launched the SMILE (Students Moving Into the Lives of the Elderly) program in 2009 which pairs students with residents at The Clare, an assisted living facility in downtown Chicago, to form intergenerational and meaningful relationships. She was ever focused on community building with students: students would visit her office hours in Damen Student Center 123 to chat or take a picture. In 2011, her likeness was immortalized in the first Sister Jean bobblehead. The figurine debuted during a February basketball game where the first 900 fans in Gentile Arena received the Sister Jean memorabilia. Following this bobblehead, two more were produced: one in 2018 which became the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum’s best seller of all time until 2020, and one in 2021 of Sister Jean in her wheelchair sporting a maroon and gold Loyola letter jacket.

For her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday on August 21, 2014, Sister Jean received a surprise party from the Loyola community, as well as an announcement of the new “Sr. Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM Day” at Loyola. Every year Loyola hosts a celebration on this day. Honoring Sister Jean was and remains at the center of the annual Water Tower Campus Block Party, held every fall semester on Pearson Street between State and Wabash in downtown Chicago. It is a Welcome Week program, hosted by the Division of Student Development’s Graduate, Professional, & Adult Student Life, where the entire Loyola community can enjoy food, musical entertainment, introductions to campus resources, and games. During this block party, attendees could take photos with Sister Jean and join together to sing her happy birthday to celebrate her legacy. On May 13, 2016, Sister Jean received a Doctor of Human Letters honorary degree from Loyola University Chicago in honor and recognition of her

decades of service and commitment to the university. On January 21, 2017, Sister Jean was inducted into the Ramblers' Athletics Hall of Fame at Gentile Arena during halftime at a men's basketball game.

Sister Jean gained international attention in 2018 during the men's basketball team's successful run in the NCAA March Madness tournament. The Ramblers made it to the Final Four, and she was featured frequently during the televised games as she supported the team. Sister Jean remained a staunch supporter of her Chicago sports teams, the Cubs, the Bears, and, of course, the Loyola Ramblers men's basketball team. In the same year, she threw the opening pitch before the Cubs' home opener. Also in 2018, on September 12, Sister Jean received the Sword of Loyola, the University's highest honor, at the Founders' Dinner. In the following year, Sister Jean's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday was met with much fanfare. As the campus celebrated, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker proclaimed August 21, 2019 "Sister Jean Day" across the state. For her birthday, Loyola announced a scholarship fund and endowment for students in honor of Sister Jean.

For her 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday, Sister Jean was honored by the CTA, becoming the namesake of the Loyola Red Line plaza. Additionally, Governor J.B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot dedicated the day in her honor. Sister Jean authored her memoir, *Wake Up with Purpose! What I've Learned in My First Hundred Years*, with Seth Davis, a sports caster and award-winning writer, before her 104<sup>th</sup> birthday. Published in February of 2023, Sister Jean shares life lessons from her century of life as a nun, teacher, and Loyola University's beloved chaplain and offers wisdom to finding joy and faith through her experiences. Her book covers topics such as the importance of lifelong learning, the value of community service, and the power of positivity. For her 105<sup>th</sup> birthday on August 21, 2024, Sister Jean received a proclamation from the incumbent President Joe Biden in recognition of her lifetime of service. She revealed the secrets to living a long life as "loving others and God, taking care of your mind and body, and interacting with young people."

Sister Jean retired in 2025 from her official campus duties of campus minister and chaplain of the Ramblers Men's Basketball team to focus on her health. She marked her departure with an uplifting message to students: "let your dreams become a reality." Sister Jean passed away on October 9, 2025, at the age of 106. Her wake was held on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at the Madonna della Strada Chapel on the Lake Shore Campus of Loyola University Chicago. A week of international tribute and remembrance followed her passing, as national leaders, faith communities, and celebrities including former president Barack Obama, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, cardinal Blase Cupich, rapper Lil Wayne, among many others expressed condolences.

### **Scope and Content**

This collection consists of 0.5 linear feet (1 box) and spans the years 1960 to 2006 and includes three series: Personal, Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony, and Audiovisual. The bulk of the papers relate to the professional advancement of Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony from priest to archbishop to cardinal. Other items in the collection relate to Sister Jean's career at Mundelein College and to jubilees and memorial services for fellow BVMs.

**Series 1: Personal, 1960-1991, Box 1**

This series contains correspondence, a project done by Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt for her master's degree, program booklets, and two articles from North Shore Magazine.

**Series 2: Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony, 1985-2006, Box 1**

This series contains correspondence from Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony, two articles about Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony, and an invitation and the program for the installation of Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony as archbishop of Los Angeles.

**Series 3: Audiovisual, 1991, undated, Box 1**

This series contains photographs of Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony, and members of Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony's family, and a video cassette tape of Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony's elevation to cardinal ceremony. For oral histories with Sister Jean, see the archivist and the Mundelein College Oral History Project Records.

**Subjects:**

Archdiocese of Los Angeles  
Mundelein College  
Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony  
Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt (1919-2025)

Box	Folder	Title	Dates
		<b><i>Sister Jean (Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM) Papers, 1960-2006, undated</i></b>	
		<b>Series 1: Personal</b>	
1	1	General Correspondence	1985-1991, undated
1	2	Jubilee Programs	1979-1987
1	3	Master's Degree Project	1960
1	4	Memorial Programs	1984-1990
1	5	Mundelein College Event Programs	1972, 1975, 1981
1	6	North Shore Magazine Articles	1985
		<b>Series 2: Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony</b>	
1	7	Articles About Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony	1985, 1992
1	8	Correspondence from Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony	1985-2006, undated
1	9	Installation as Archbishop of Los Angeles	1985
		<b>Series 3: Audiovisual</b>	
1	10	Photographs	undated
1	11	Roger Michael Cardinal Mahony's Elevation to Cardinal [VHS tape]	1991