

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF



*Mary Frances*  
**JENIFER-DURANT**

*Sunrise: November 12, 1932 – Sunset: August 15, 2023*

**SERVICE, FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 2023**  
**Family Hour: 10:00 am | Homegoing: 11:00 am**

**CATHEDRAL OF THE MOST  
BLESSED SACRAMENT**  
**9844 Woodward Avenue | Detroit, MI 48202**

*Fr. Ronald DeHondt and Fr. Lorn Snow S.J., Officiating*





# Order of Service

Introductory Rites

Processional Hymn.....*Life is In Your Hands*

Blessing of the Body

Placing of the Pall

Obituary.....Larry Waites

Liturgy of the Word

1st Reading.....*Ecclesiastes 3:1-11*.....Mary Frances Phillips

2nd Reading.....*Philippians 3:20-21; 4:4-9*.....Angela Phillips-Tyler

Gospel.....*John 14:1-6*

Homily.....Fr. Ronald DeHondt

Prayers of the Faithful.....Joanne Durant-Waites

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offertory Hymn.....*Amazing Grace*

Presentation of Gifts.....Alycia Tyler and Treska Seay

Communion Hymn.....*Total Praise*

Meditation Hymn.....*His Eye is on the Sparrow*

Final Commendations

Recessional Hymn.....*Take Me to the King*





# Obituary

**Mary Frances Jenifer-Durant** was born Mary Frances Jenifer in Washington, D.C., on November 12, 1932. She was Regina Queen Jenifer and James Edward Jenifer's fourth child and only daughter. As a child, she attended St. Anthony Catholic Church and received all the sacraments.

Coming of age in Washington D.C. in a white neighborhood, segregation barred Mary and her siblings from playing at their neighborhood playground and instead left them to do so in a field and vacant lot. They were able to cope with racism by fostering joy and happiness. On Saturday nights, Mary and her friends enjoyed dancing at each other's homes while listening to some of her favorite artists, Ray Charles, Nat King Cole, and Lena Horne.

She was bused to Black schools, including John F. Cook Elementary, Banneker Junior High, and Armstrong High School. In college, Mary studied home economics at West Virginia State University, where she later fell in love and wed Joseph Solomon Durant on August 30, 1953. There are five daughters born from this union. She was a gifted seamstress and tailor who made garments for designers and clothes for her children, and ties and suit alterations for her husband. Once, Mary knitted a powder blue suit for herself. She taught her children how to sew to carry forward her legacy.

As a homemaker, Mary taught her daughters how to cook and bake. She baked homemade Toll House chocolate chip cookies and the most delicious chocolate fudge brownies, which her family and friends constantly requested. She valued floral beauty and subscribed to Better Homes and Gardens magazine, which opened a window into the world of home decorating, gardening, and recipes. She was fond of collecting cookbooks and consistently tried new recipes. When her children were out of school on Fridays, Mary would drive to the Better Made store, buy a family-size bag of potato chips, and the store clerk would gift each of her children with their own individual-size bag. Upon arriving home, everyone made vanilla ice cream floats with Faygo pop. Orange was Mary's favorite Faygo pop flavor.

Mary prepared formal Sunday dinners for her family with sweet and savory dishes, including pies, cobblers, and cakes. She took great pleasure in organizing family outings for her children, both inside and outside the home, including arts and crafts, trips to the movies and the drive-ins, the circus, the Ice Capades, musicals, plays, the YMCA for swim lessons, and educational and music activities, including African American history classes and piano lessons. After shopping, Mary brought her children to the department store's candy counter for their own bag of sweets. Her favorite candies were spice drops, orange slices, black jellybeans, and black licorice.

During the Black is Beautiful movement, Mary was the first person in the family to style her hair in an afro which she associated with pride, beauty, ease, and comfort. She was thrilled to wear her hair naturally. No more pressing, curling, and rollers! One day, Mary proclaimed, "This is it," as she admired her hair in the dining room mirror while picking her afro out. "I'm wearing this from now on." Mary loved the wash and care convenience that came with wearing an afro. Earrings, ideally pearls, were the finishing touch to her look. Her children followed suit, styling their hair in beautiful afros. Mary took great pride in her heritage and culture and subscribed to Black magazines such as JET, Essence, and Ebony to keep informed about current affairs in politics, fashion, entertainment, and African American history.

Mary returned to school and earned her Associate of Arts in Dietetic Technology from Wayne County Community College at 60 and placed on the Dean's List. She then worked as a Certified Registered Dietitian for the Detroit Department of Health's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. She delighted in cuddling the precious babies who came with their parents to the WIC office for assistance. Mary was the City of Detroit's oldest employee, and after 19 years of service with WIC, she retired with a full pension. The City of Detroit recognized Mary for her years of service. Additionally, Mary was employed by Weight Watchers International, where she demonstrated and continued to test recipes. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded Mary

a certificate of achievement for completing courses that provided her with the skills to assist in a time of crisis. She was a caregiver to her grandchildren and her grandniece, Arica Harris, who she adored.

As a devout Catholic, Mary held executive leadership positions in her church community and religious groups. She attended St. Gregory's Catholic Church with her children, where they completed the sacraments. At St. Gregory, Mary wielded a substantial amount of political influence. She served as the longest-reigning President of the Altar Society for multiple terms, a powerful institution. Mary also served as a Eucharistic Minister and a liturgy lector. Moreover, she was a Mercy Squad Leader at the Vacation Bible School and belonged to the 50 and Up Club at St. Gregory. She was a godparent to many and stood with the families when her godchildren were baptized in church.

Mary found a new spiritual home at The Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Detroit, after St. Gregory closed, where she resumed her religious obligations as a Eucharistic Minister and an Altar Society member. She was designated a lector, a 5-year post, and awarded the distinction of Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion through the Archdiocese of Detroit Office of Christian Worship at The Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament. She performed her duties as an Inner Guard Treasurer and the Financial Secretary for the Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary Court #196, an international charitable Catholic women's organization. Furthermore, Mary held memberships in the Birthday Club, comprised of her close-knit circle of friends, and the Michigan Chapter of the Red Hat Society.

Mary traveled internationally on missionary trips with spiritual leader and former director of the Black Catholic Ministry in the Archdiocese of Detroit, Dr. Father Clarence Williams, Jr. These spiritual journeys included the Millennium Pilgrimage to Africa, where she received the Motherland Certificate of Achievement from Our Lady of Peace Basilica in the Ivory Coast, West Africa and the Black Catholic Biblical Tour of the Holylands at the Sphinx of Egypt in Cairo. Mary rededicated her baptism at the Jordan River. She always returned from these experiences with treasured gifts for her children.

On August 15, 2023, Mary passed away at 90. She is preceded in death by her husband, Joseph Solomon, and her two brothers: Joseph Melvin Jenifer and Francis DeSales Jenifer (who died in infancy). She is survived by her five daughters, Mary Catherine (Durant) Lyles, Diane Regina Durant, Joanne Marie Durant-Waites (Larry), Karen Durant McMillian, and Carolyn Naomi Durant-Blair (Eugene); seven grandchildren: Mary Frances Phillips (her namesake), Angela Marie Phillips-Tyler (Benjamin), Brian Christopher McMillian, Elise Danielle Keys (Javein), Jenifer Katherine Waites; Eugene Caelan Blair, and Jaelan Solomon Blair, five great-grandchildren: Benjamin Joseph Tyler, Jr., Alycia Josephine Tyler, Maia Elise Smith, Javein Adonis Keys II, and Naomi Michelle Keys; three brothers: James Edward Jenifer, Jr., Robert (Bobby) DeSales Jenifer, and Jerome Queen Jenifer (Desarie); and many nieces, nephews, and other loving family members, godchildren; and friends.







*God* looked around His garden  
 And found an empty place.  
 He then looked down upon the earth  
 And saw your tired face.  
 He put His arms around you  
 And lifted you to rest.  
 God's garden must be beautiful  
 He always takes the best.  
 He saw the road was getting rough  
 And the hills were hard to climb,  
 So He closed your weary eyelids  
 And whispered "Peace be thine."  
 It broke our hearts to lose you  
 But you didn't go alone,  
 For part of us went with you  
 The day God called you home.

*In the* name of Jesus,  
 Mommy will be a crown of splendor  
 in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem  
 in the hand of your God.

*Isaiah 62:3*  
 Amen

*Love,*  
 Your daughters *Mary, Diane,*  
*Joanne, Karen & Carolyn*





## *Pallbearers*

Brian McMillan  
Caelan Blair  
Benjamin Tyler, Sr.

Javein Keys  
Benjamin Tyler, Jr.  
Brian Malone

## *Honorary Pallbearers*

John Jenifer  
Larry Waites  
Michael Jenifer

Burley Durant  
David Jenifer  
Bryan Durant

Joseph Melvin Jenifer, Jr.

## *Flower Bearers*

Friends and Family

## *Interment*

ELMWOOD CEMETERY  
*(Private Interment will be held later)*

## *Final Arrangements Entrusted To*

JAMES H. COLE FUNERAL HOME  
2624 W Grand Blvd | Detroit, MI 48208

## *Acknowledgment of Appreciation*

The family wishes to acknowledge with deep appreciation the many comforting messages, prayers and many other expressions of kindness and concern shown at this time in thought and deed. A more personal acknowledgement will be made at a later date.



PROGRAM  
ENTRUSTED TO

**MAYS**  
MULTIMEDIA

MAYS MULTIMEDIA  
Elizabeth Mays, Memorial Consultant  
Printing Since 1946 | (313) 861-1900  
Programs online at [www.MaysMedia.us](http://www.MaysMedia.us)

Scan this  
QR Code  
to view this  
program  
online.



Mary Durant