



Cecelia Lech Payne

December 4, 1940 - October 12, 2023

Cecelia Lech Payne, 82, of Gainesville, VA, passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on Thursday, October 12, 2023, after a brief illness. She was born on December 4, 1940, in Plainfield, NJ, to Peter and Anna Lech. Known as “Cece,” “Aunt CeCe,” “Grandma Cece,” or “Great Grandma Cece,” she put relationships with others at the center of her life. Named after Saint Cecelia, the patron saint of music, Cece loved to sing, and always had music playing in her home. As a child, she danced and sang while completing weekly cleaning chores. She was actively involved in the Polish Falcons Organization and cherished her job at the A & P as a high school student.

While attending secretarial school, she was interviewed by a well-known but secretive federal agency, and after graduation took a job with the federal government and moved to Washington, DC. She devoted much energy to her work and contributed a great deal over her career, gaining many travel opportunities and lifelong friendships along the way. Cece continued to love travel and adventure and sought out knowledge of other cultures, languages, and religions, coming to these experiences with an open heart and mind. A patriot in the best sense of the word, Cecelia felt proud of her country, and her independent political ideas allowed space for all perspectives.

Cecelia was devoted to the Catholic Church and attended regularly, while nourishing her faith in many other ways. During the COVID pandemic, she

became an avid participant in the Zoom services broadcast through Old St. Patrick's Church in Chicago, the church that her niece and family attends. She most often encountered the divine in nature, basking in the sun at the beach, caring for wildlife and watching the backyard birds, especially hummingbirds, from her back porch, and gardening in her backyard, planting a flower recently purchased (on sale, of course!) from Merrifield Gardens, her "happy place." She also loved bicycling, and some of her happiest moments were cruising on two wheels.

Like her politics, Cece's understanding of God was open-minded. She was wonderful at being present to the moment, and she particularly enjoyed getting to know little children and spending time with them one-on-one. To that end, she was a Teacher's Aide while her sons were in elementary school, and often welcomed neighborhood children to her house for childcare. Later in life, she found great meaning in working as a volunteer with several organizations dear to her heart, including So Others Might Eat (Washington, DC). She also volunteered weekly at the hospital soothing and rocking to sleep babies born prematurely.

In her passing, Cecelia leaves behind a loving family that was the center of her life, many of whom gather annually at the Outer Banks, a reunion initiated by Cece many years ago. She is survived by her two sons, Stephen Payne (Renee) and Bryan Payne (Faith), her granddaughter Cristina, grandsons Travis and Shawn, and great grandsons, Caleb and Colby; her younger sister, Jane Pryce (Bradford) of Michigan and family, which includes two nephews Matthew Pryce (Sharon) and their children, and John Pryce (Sheila) and their children, and one niece Julia Pryce (Heriberto Soto), and their children. She is also survived by nephews Jeffrey Kephart (Karen) and Peter Kephart, and nieces Christine Kephart (Richard Kraus) and Kathleen Kephart and her family, from the family of her older sister, Bernice Kephart of New Jersey, who predeceased Cece.

A funeral mass for Cecelia will be held on November 11, 2023, 11am, at Holy Trinity Church in Gainesville, VA, with a repast afterward at Heritage Hunt.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making donations in memory of Cecelia L. Payne to the following organizations. Search online and/or click on the links below:

So Others Might Eat (SOME) Old St Patricks Beloved Retreat Community
Doctors Without Borders WETA (classical music station in Washington, DC)
and PBS

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

NOV **11**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Holy Trinity Catholic Church
8213 Linton Hall Rd
Gainesville, VA 20155-2997
(703) 753-6700

Tribute Wall



“ A grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Cecelia Lech Payne.

November 17, 2023 at 07:58 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Cecelia Lech Payne.

November 02, 2023 at 02:51 PM



“ Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Cecelia Lech Payne.



November 02, 2023 at 02:51 PM