

Remembering Margaret McGinley, IHM

Sept. 28, 1931 – Jan. 12, 2021

*“You take the high road and I’ll take the low road,
and I’ll be in Scotland before you ...”*



You didn't have to know Margaret very long to learn that both her parents were born in Glasgow, Scotland. Her father, James, was self-taught; he proved himself to be an excellent workman in all matters. Agnes, her mother, and James came to Detroit in 1929. He worked for Ford Motor Company and later for Detroit Public Schools.

Agnes and James had three children: Jessie and the twins, Michael and Margaret. Michael died at five weeks, but he lived on in Margaret's memory. It's touching to think that they are now together.

Agnes, Margaret's mother had very poor vision and her entry into the United States was questioned for this reason. However, the immigration officer quipped that she'd had enough vision to find herself a man!

Jessie and Margaret attended Precious Blood Grade School and Immaculata High School. Margaret remembered the Adrian Dominican Sisters as being happy and carefree and the IHM Sisters as severe. Yet the wonderful mystery of vocation drew her to the IHM community in 1949, right after high school. She received the name James Agnes. In her autobiography, Margaret relates that her dad missed her very much. Her mother told him: "If you are that lonesome, go to Monroe and bring her home."

Margaret's first mission was St. Patrick in Wyandotte, Mich. Her parents used to attend the Sunday Mass there just so they could see Margaret walk into the church with the other sisters. After St. Patrick, she continued in primary grades at Our Lady, Queen of Hope in Detroit and St. Mary Academy in Monroe. Next it was grade six at St. Matthew, Detroit. From 1962 to 1971, she taught high school at Holy Redeemer and St. Martin, Detroit; Port Huron Catholic; and Sacred Heart, Roseville.

When Margaret's parents were ready to move to the west coast of Florida, she asked permission to go there and live with her parents to help in the care of her mother, who had serious signs of Alzheimer's. Thus 1971 began a very different chapter of her life.

Margaret chose to teach in the public-school system. She was thrilled to recount that she applied for her first position on Oct. 15, the feast of St. Teresa, and got the job. While working there she became friends with two seventh-grade teachers at Tarpon Springs Elementary School who were wonderful resources in curriculum, as well as good friends.

On May 1, 1974, Margaret's mother died. When she was driving home from school that day, Margaret recounts that a real and strange feeling passed through her. When she

got home, she found her mother and dad sitting at the kitchen table, where they had been playing cards. Margaret knew her mother had just died, even before her father knew it. She had the difficult task of telling him.

Margaret wrote in her commitment forms at that time: "I feel teaching is my most fruitful apostolate. I thoroughly enjoy my work. I feel responsible for the care and companionship of my 84-year old dad. I try to bring happiness, concern and peace to many aging and lonely senior citizens." The death of her mother was a great loss to Margaret and her father. Only three years later, he too passed away. Margaret remained very grateful to the community for allowing her to spend her parents' last years with them.

Margaret continued teaching language arts in middle school in Tarpon Springs until 1994. During that time the county recognized her as an outstanding teacher, and she received a plaque at a special dinner.

Margaret's niece, Margie, her husband and their three children moved to Florida, and she became a significant part of their lives. Even to this day they are close. In addition, membership in the Southwest Province brought her companionship.

One year the McGinley family "took the high road" and flew to Glasgow, Scotland. There they visited her mother's brother, John, and her sister, Meg, and their families. It was the trip of a lifetime for all the McGinleys.

In 1994, Margaret retired from teaching but remained in Florida until 2000. At that time, she returned to Monroe and offered her services at the Motherhouse. Sisters Mary Ann Kane, James Marian Sarchet, and Mary Ellen Ginty invited Margaret to live with them at the house on Godfroy Street. They moved in mid-July and enjoyed prayer, meals and fun times together. Sad to say this lasted only two months because Mary Ann became ill and moved to the Motherhouse. Two years later, Mary Ellen was killed in a terrible automobile accident. What a strange and sad turn of events! But faith in God's love carried both Margaret and James Marian.

In 2003, when the renovation of the Motherhouse was complete, Margaret moved there, becoming assistant sacristan and driver for the Motherhouse sisters. While making retreats Margaret often wrote poetry. Her good friend, James Marian, helped her put the poems into a lovely booklet.

Margaret realized that her memory was not always sharp, so in May 2006, she asked to live in the Memory Care Unit. There, she participated in the life of the community by assisting in cleaning the aviary and aquarium, sewing nametags, singing in the choir, and being her loving, joyful self. Almost daily, her good friend, James Marian joined her to play cribbage and do crossword puzzles.

In February 2010, Margaret missed a step when coming down from the choir loft. This resulted in knee surgery, which she weathered in her usual cheerful way.

Margaret wrote in her autobiography: "As I await my 'low road' journey, I have more

time for God.” The following poem was written during retreat in 1992.

More Time for God

Often I've filled my time with flutter
And neglected to simply utter:
“Help me, God.”

When I was in a whirlwind
Or negotiating a tailspin,
You helped me, God.

If you found me in a hustle
Or continually in a bustle,
You helped me, God.

Many times, throughout my life,
You were comfort in my strife,
You helped me, God.

Blessings, crosses, challenges, too,
Came direct to me from You.
You helped me, God.

As I journey, now renewed,
Fresh with Your Spirit imbued
You continue to help me, God.

I am ready to let go
And now let be, with grace's flow.
I know You will help me, God.

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Delivered by Nancy Ayotte, IHM, Jan. 19, 2021