

Obituary



Sister Theresa Milne, IHM, 95, died on Tuesday, Dec. 18, at IHM Senior Living Community, in Monroe, Mich.

Sister Theresa was one of 10 children born to James and Mary (Fitzpatrick) Milne. Born in Detroit, on Nov. 11, 1923, she was baptized as Theresa at St. Charles Church. After attending St. Charles Elementary School and graduating from St. Charles High School, she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe. She received the religious name, Sister Marius. Sister Theresa celebrated her 75th Jubilee in 2017.

Sister Theresa earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College and a master's degree from the University of Detroit. Her ministry in formal education spanned 25 years and brought her to St. Mary Elementary and St. Mary Academy, Monroe; St. Frederick, Pontiac; St. Matthew, Gesu, St. Agnes and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Detroit; and 10 years at Mother of Our Savior, Redford, Mich.

In 1968, Sister Theresa began working in campus ministry at the Newman Center of Bowling Green State University (BGSU), Bowling Green, Ohio. Her ministry expanded to St. Thomas More University Parish at BGSU. She joined the university faculty and served for 10 years as an instructor and as Ohio- and clinical supervisor of student teachers. She immensely enjoyed these years of ministry. After teaching, she continued to reside in Bowling Green and served as a mediator at the university and for the Toledo Diocesan Court of Equity. Sister Theresa endeavored to create structures that would promote justice, peace and unity. She retired to the Motherhouse in 2005, ministering among her sisters and pursuing personal interests.

Remembering

Sister Theresa Milne was born in Detroit on Nov. 11, 1923, the daughter of James Robson Milne and Mary Sarah Fitzpatrick. Her father was a native of Aberdeen, Scotland. After becoming a master iron molder, he married Helen Sutherland and they had two sons.

Because there was little opportunity to earn a living in his native Scotland, he and his wife left for the United States of America, at the advice of his brother, a successful printer. In the United States, there would seem to be better opportunities to advance in his trade and support his family.

James, Helen and their two sons left Scotland on the "Empress of Britain," immigrating to the U.S. via Canada and arriving in Detroit on July 10, 1910. He was soon able to purchase a four-bedroom home in St. Charles Parish near Indian Village. In 1915 both he and his wife, Helen, were stricken with typhoid fever and Helen died. Their two sons had grown, each had learned a trade and had left home.

In 1916, James became a U.S. citizen, leased his home and moved closer to the foundry on the banks of the Detroit River where he was employed. By a strange coincidence he met Mary Sarah Fitzpatrick Carson, a widow who had grown up in Middleborough, England, whom he later married in 1918. They moved back to James's home. James and Mary Sarah had three children, Elizabeth, Douglas and Theresa. Theresa was baptized with the name of Theresa Anne McKay Milne, her grandmother's name.

When Theresa was only 9 months old, her mother died of cancer. Again, her father became a widower with three children to rear. Their maternal grandmother then took over as mother of the family and raised the children until Theresa was an eighth-grader at St. Charles School. Eventually Elizabeth married, Douglas became a Capuchin friar, taking the religious name of Brother Ignatius and Theresa entered the IHM congregation in 1941, taking the name Sister Marius. Her father passed away the next year.

When Theresa and Douglas were growing up, because there was only a two-year difference in their ages, they were great pals, a relationship that lasted until Brother Ignatius' death. This relationship continued all her life. Theresa would often call on her brother, "Iggie," for all kinds of help, finding a lost item, getting into the right lane on the highway or giving insights into a difficult situation. It is not she alone who recognized his great help in all kinds of situations. Many people came to him, seeking help after the death of Father Solanus Casey, whom he had replaced at the Monastery when Father Solanus became too ill to serve.

When Theresa was in the third grade, she confided to Sister Catherine that she was so alone; she had no mother like other children. Sister Catherine told her that she indeed had a mother she could talk to. It was Our Blessed Mother and Sister Catherine suggested that each day before returning home, she should stop by the church and speak to Our Lady, whose statue was on an altar in the church. She did this for many years and even her companions would wait for her so that they could all walk home together.

From her earliest years in religious life, Terry, as we lovingly called her, had great trust in the providence of God. During a retreat, a retreat master recommended that the retreatants should become acquainted with Pierre de Caussade's book on abandonment to divine providence. This book had a strong influence on her spirituality. With Terry, it was always "Not my will but God's be done" or "Whatever God wants."

Terry's educational background included a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College, a master's degree in education from the University of Detroit and graduate courses in law from the University of Toledo.

Sister Terry had a rich and productive ministerial life. From 1943 to 1957, she taught in elementary schools in Detroit. In 1957, she was appointed as a full-time teacher/principal at Mother of Our Savior. In 1966, she was appointed principal of St. Agnes Grade School and the following year, principal of Gesu School.

In 1970, during a trip to Europe, Terry was able to make a side trip to Scotland, where she met a few relatives. This sparked an interest in family history, an interest that she pursued some time later.

In 1971 she was sent to initiate a Newman program at St. Thomas University Parish near Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Testimonials to her vibrant faith and organizational skills are too numerous to mention here. One special program that she, along with her colleagues, among whom was Father James Bacik, initiated was named the Antioch Program. This was a discussion program, mostly on religious-oriented issues, that included faculty, students and members of the University Parish.

Shortly thereafter she joined the faculty as a supervisor of student teachers at Bowling Green State University and was asked to direct the Navarre Elementary School Teaching Center in Toledo where many student teachers were placed. She served in this capacity from 1971 to 1974. During this time, she took advantage of the opportunity to study law at the University of Toledo.

During her tenure at Bowling Green State, she was appointed by the governor of Ohio to serve a four-year term as one of four commissioners on a Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Commission, a commission that had been created by the Ohio legislature. Appointees were selected by the governor, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the president of the Ohio Senate and the speaker of the House.

In 1982, Sister Theresa was offered a sabbatical leave to pursue study or to develop a special project. Her special project was the tracing of her family heritage in Scotland. In 1992, she retired from teaching. From 1992 to 2005, she was in residence at Bowling Green State University as a mediator.

Sister Theresa became a friend to anyone in need. She used her legal skills to fight for a colleague, a Chinese faculty member who was denied tenure, and won the case based on racial discrimination. She encouraged IHM personnel working in health care to improve their skills through further education. She tutored one aide who had excellent skills but was not a native speaker of English. She even sought an out-of-state-sponsored program to prepare health care personnel and with the agency, spent many hours tutoring the woman so that she successfully passed the CENA test and regained her job at the IHM Health Care Center.

She befriended many others who needed a reassuring ear and gave them courage to face whatever their trouble was. Terry was always reaching out to those in need. We read in our IHM Constitutions the message of our co-founder, Louis Florent Gillet, "I want to be everywhere I see so many needs." This was Terry's desire, a desire that she lived to the full.

Terry, you were not quite able to complete your 10-year project on the genealogy of your family, but you have left behind most of your manuscript – a remarkable piece of scholarship, the legacy of your research – which reveals your great love of family and its heritage. It was a real joy to be able to share your enthusiasm each time you had a new find in your search.

Dear Terry, we will miss your vibrant spirit, your deep faith, your inspiration, your readiness to help others in need, and we pray that we too may be able to say "God's will be done" in whatever plans God may have for us and the future of our congregation. May you now enjoy eternal rest in the presence of the God you loved so well.

Written by Marie Andre Walsh, IHM
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