

Obituary



Sister Mary Jo Rosenau, IHM, died Thursday, Sept. 17, at IHM Senior Living Community. She was 85.

Born in Detroit on Dec. 14, 1934, to Martin and Josephine (Clos) Rosenau, Mary Josephine Rosenau was baptized in St. Edward Parish. The family included a sister and two brothers. Mary Jo attended the parish school and later Annunciation High School, where she graduated in 1952. That summer she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Monroe) and received the religious name Sister Ann Martin.

Sister Mary Jo earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College and master's degree from Wayne State University. She taught all subjects to elementary students at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Detroit, and within a few years moved to high school education, often in the sciences and mathematics, at St. Mary, Mount Clemens; St. Charles, Detroit; and Sacred Heart, Roseville. She taught for many years at Gabriel Richard High School, Riverview, also serving as head of the science department, and at Holy Redeemer High School, Detroit. In all her teaching assignments, Sister Mary Jo participated in the students' Catholic education beyond the classroom through sodality, altar servers and catechism classes.

She lived at the convent at Holy Redeemer in an IHM community for many years and continued to live there after retiring from teaching in 1999. Always committed to students' education, Sister Mary Jo volunteered her services as a tutor. Upon the closing of the convent at Holy Redeemer, she resided in Grosse Pointe Woods.

After moving to the Motherhouse in 2012, Sister Mary Jo shared in communal activities, learning opportunities through workshops and retreats and ministry of service to her fellow sisters. She was a dedicated, long-time volunteer in the IHM Development Office until the time of her death. She enjoyed working with staff and sharing appreciation for those who support the congregation.

Remembering

Sister Mary Jo was a warm and humble person, very easy to be with. She was born to Martin Rosenau and Josephine Clos Rosenau on Dec. 14, 1934. Her sister, Joyce, and two brothers, Martin and Richard, pre-deceased her.

Mary Jo grew up in Detroit. Her father died when she was only 6 years old, and the family moved in with her grandparents. This was hard for a little child – she remembers her mother telling her not to make any noise so as not to disturb her grandparents.

Mary Jo attended St. Edward Elementary School with the Dominican Sisters and met the IHMs while attending Annunciation High School. She wanted to join the IHMs even though two of her aunts were St. Joseph Sisters and they wanted her to join them. She said: "I think the IHMs were closer to the reality I had of what sisters should be. You could just feel a reverence. I don't know what it was, but I was definitely impressed."

A doctor said a thyroid problem might cause difficulties with the strenuous life of an IHM Sister. Determined to prove him wrong, she worked on her health all summer and prayed to Mary and St. Joseph. She was accepted into the IHM community after a second medical examination revealed a reversal in her condition.

"The minute I walked into the Motherhouse, I said, "'I'm home! I found what I was looking for.'" Mary Jo began her teaching ministry at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Detroit, followed by teaching math and physics at St. Mary High School in Mount Clemens, Mich. She hadn't looked at a physics book in five years; undaunted she dove right in, preparing classes until lights-out each night.

"The first couple of years I was just a chapter ahead of the children; I taught the whole range of math and physics, the Junior classes in Church History, and prepared the children for the Science Fair each year."

Sister Mary Jo recalls one student who got in touch with her a few years later. He had gone to Michigan Technological University (MTU), and he wrote to her to say that one day in class she told him she thought he would be good in research because of the way he asked questions. That was exactly what he had done, and he said it was because of what Mary Jo had told him, "That was a real highlight for me!"

Mary Jo received three National Science Foundation Grants, which she used to further her education, attending the University of Detroit for nuclear atomic physics, Wayne State University for physical science and MTU for engineering. These culminated in a master's degree in education from Wayne State.

Sister Mary Jo "retired" in 1999 from Holy Redeemer High School, Detroit, where she taught math and physics for 31 years and continued to tutor and teach physics until 2004. She then moved to Our Lady Star of the Sea in 2004 and volunteered as a tutor in the primary grades.

In the early 2000s, Mary Jo and Eleanor Sekol would faithfully come weekly to volunteer at the IHM Development office, which at that time was located at Marian High School. The two of them were like clockwork – we always knew they would be there. At Christmas time, Mary Jo would spoil us with a large container of her hullless popcorn that was bathed in caramel

sauce. Needless to say, the container was practically empty by the time she left that day. It became a Christmas tradition for us.

When Mary Jo moved home in 2012, she continued to volunteer daily in the Development office here on campus and took great pride in being part of the fund- and friend-raising efforts. The Development staff fondly remembers Sister Mary Jo as dependable, organized, kind and caring. She was always willing to take on new tasks with enthusiasm. Mary Jo brought a lot of joy with her when she came to the office and enjoyed friendships and camaraderie with everyone. She was happy to share with the staff when her nephew and family members were planning to visit. On a personal note, Mary Jo loved celebrating her birthday and holidays with the team. Richard, Marilyn, Hilda and Kristen will miss her greatly. Actually Mary Jo only agreed to move to assisted living if she was assured that she could continue to minister in the Development office.

Her family was incredibly important to her. Prior to her sister Joyce's death, she often spent weekends with her. Her nephew, Paul, who works at St John Hospital arrived one morning at 7:15 from his night shift and appeared in Mary Jo's doorway. Looking up at him, she said, "Really, I didn't even have my breakfast!" and so they shared breakfast that morning.

One of her other nephews, Mark and his wife, Denise visited her often. Mary Jo often spoke of Theresa and their mutual desire to visit, but distance made this difficult because Theresa lives in Tennessee. She was in regular contact with her sister-in-law, Arlene. The weekends were often filled with phone calls from family. Mary Jo had nurtured in them a feeling of belonging and wanted you all to be one.

The community of IHMs who shared life with her on Third floor F and G also said Mary Jo was friendly and very present to them ... she never failed to attend their activities. It seems fair to say that Mary Jo was a good friend and an "all-around community woman." You will be missed by so many, Mary Jo.

Compiled by Roberta Richmond, IHM, with help from a "Then and Now" article.
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