

## Obituary

Sister Marie André Walsh, IHM, 101, died of natural causes Friday, May 8, at IHM Senior Living Community in Monroe.

Elinore Catherine Walsh, born May 26, 1918 in Portland, Maine, was the daughter of John and Mary (Murray) Walsh. She and her brother Larry grew up there and were immersed in an educational environment from early ages. Though it was during the Great Depression, their parents saved for their college educations, and Elinore attended Marygrove College in Detroit. She earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove, a master's degree from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., and a doctorate in foreign language education from the University of Texas, Austin, Texas.



At Marygrove, Elinore met sisters from the IHM community and began to discern her call to religious life. On July 31, 1939, Elinore entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, and received the religious name Sister Marie André. She was an 80-year Jubilarian this year.

Immediately upon entering the IHM congregation, Sister Marie André began a long, distinguished academic career specializing in French and Spanish. Her teaching ministry brought her to St. Mary Academy, Monroe; Immaculata High School, Marygrove College and St. Charles, Detroit. In 1966 she was missioned to Austin, Texas, where she and four other sisters set up a college for women, Maryhill College, at St. Edward's University. The college later merged with St. Edward's.

While teaching, Sister Marie André initiated and directed the Bilingual-Bicultural Teacher Education Program, a national award-winning program to train Spanish-speaking teachers for the bilingual classroom. She secured federal funding to educate children of migrant farm workers in Texas and assisted in establishing a parochial school system in the Samoan Islands. In 1986, in addition to her teaching responsibilities, she was appointed the first Vicar for Religious for the Diocese of Austin. She retired from St. Edward's in 1991 and held her role as vicar until 2004.

Upon her retirement Sister Marie André returned home to IHM Senior Living Community. She worked in the Archives Department and kept the Motherhouse Chronicles. She also served on the Elder Council, planned retreats and lectured at liturgies.

## **Remembering**

It is a privilege for us to celebrate the life and ministry of our relative, our IHM sister and our friend, Sister Marie Andre Walsh. We celebrate the nearly 102 years that she has journeyed with us and among God's people.

She was born on May 26, 1918. Hers was a rich Irish heritage from her mother Mary Helena (Murray) and her father, John Anthony Walsh. They provided a strong Catholic formation at home in Portland, Maine. There she and her brother Lawrence Murray Walsh grew up. In her autobiography, Marie Andre explained that the Walshs lived at a distance from the parish school. Mindful that parents of that era were bound under pain of excommunication to send their children to a Catholic school, her father secured permission to provide Catholic education to his children at home.

"As a result," she wrote, "there was no conversation at the dinner table until my father had completed his daily instruction in doctrine and/or church history. He was a faith-filled man and I recall how each morning I would see my father standing before his crucifix praying before leaving for work. Then he would place the sign of the cross on the forehead of each family member before leaving the house."

In her extended family, Marie Andre could boast of a first cousin Joseph E. Murray, who received the Nobel Prize in physiology and medicine in 1990 for his collaborative work with E. Donnall Thomas on the first successful kidney transplant surgery. Joseph's sister, Norma Murray, also achieved recognition as a translator at the Nuremberg Trials.

In such an educational environment, the Walsh children grew to college age. Their parents had saved money for their education in a Catholic environment. These were the years of the Great Depression, but the children, Elinore and Larry, were sent to the Midwest for higher education. Elinore came to Marygrove College in Detroit and Larry went to Notre Dame.

Marie Andre wrote, "We had unusual links to Marygrove, in that the president of Marygrove at the time, Dr. George Herman Derry, the only lay president of a Catholic college in the United States, had been a classmate of my father in elementary school in Portland. His wife, Gertrude Mann (daughter of Horace Mann, the founder of the public-school system) grew up in Milford, Mass., the home base of my mother." And so, in 1935, Elinore, who had no interest in becoming a nun at the time, and who had known only Mercy Sisters in her parish, met and was attracted to the IHM Sisters at Marygrove. She wrote, "My discovery: they were a spirited, outgoing, caring group of women who excelled in the art of teaching. The Holy Spirit tugged at my heart to be

like them." "I fought the attraction for three years, prayed every day about it, entered discernment with Sister Marie Celeste, and the Lord won out." She entered the community on July 1, 1939 and was received as a novice Jan. 1, 1940. Her religious name was Sister Marie Andre.

She had graduated from Marygrove in 1939 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in French. Sister Rosalita Kelly, long-time professor at Marygrove and author of the centennial history *No Greater Service*, knew Elinore's talents from her undergraduate years. It was no surprise then that both as postulant and novice, Elinore was immediately engaged as translator and researcher on Kelly's remarkable history.

Entering the community as a certified teacher, she was quickly on the way to a long and singular ministry as an educator. With a short stint at St. Mary Academy in Monroe, she soon moved to Immaculata High School in Detroit for three "very happy" years. In 1944, she began work on a master's degree in French and Spanish at Catholic University and soon undertook a nine-year ministry at Marygrove College. With those "spirited, outgoing, caring women" she had so loved as a student, she contributed wholeheartedly to the shaping of the Marygrove spirit. Of course, she taught students majoring in French. She also provided intensive language courses during the summer to sisters having a language requirement for a bachelor's degree.

But she had only begun to explore the locations and the possibilities open to her many talents. She moved once more into secondary education, first at St. Charles in Detroit and then again at St. Mary Academy. In the last three of her 10 years at St. Mary, she was assistant principal.

Then in 1966, the community selected five sisters to set up a "coordinate college for women" at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. It was to be known as Maryhill College. Marie Andre recounted many a humorous tale of the IHMs' early days at St. Edward's. She recalls developing an esprit de corps with girls most comfortable when barefoot in the dorms. Their culture did not include the niceties of an afternoon tea, wearing gloves and stylish hat. She recounts the ruckus of a panty raid by male students from St. Edward's.

Marie Andre also recognized the declining support for Maryhill College by a new administration at St. Edward's. During the changing configuration at the university, however, the Board of Trustees supported her becoming a Doctor of Philosophy specializing in Spanish and French for her future appointment as academic dean of Maryhill.

Marie Andre and her IHM companions made valuable contributions when Maryhill and St. Edward's merged. They helped shape the core curriculum and contributed to building a new spirit as a co-educational institution. Marie Andre initiated a program to prepare elementary school teachers for Spanish-speaking children. It was known as The Bilingual-Bicultural Teacher Education Program. She obtained funds from the federal government under Title VII. From 1964-1988, this program was funded to educate teachers for Spanish-speaking children in the elementary schools of Texas. Bob Tipton, with whom Marie Andre worked at the Texas Education Agency, pointed to her contribution when he wrote "... through her work in bilingual education she has changed the educational lives of millions of children who will never know her name." What a tribute!

In 1980 and 1982, the Board of Trustees funded Marie Andre's work in the South Pacific to assist the cardinal there in obtaining Title VII funding for a Catholic school system for American Samoa. In summary, Marie Andre wrote, "My two trips to the Samoan Islands opened my eyes to a whole new world and memories of my experiences there are still fresh in my mind."

"The years at St. Edward's were especially fulfilling to me as an educator because I was able to recruit and teach the children of seasonal farm-workers whose only knowledge of life was the picking of crops as a family group. The life of a crop-picker in the fields was a grueling one, but there was no hope for a better life without an education. Many of the young people ... had come with a very poor educational background, so it was a challenge to make up for their deficiencies. However, among them were many jewels in the rough and they brought to the classroom skills which we could not have taught them, skills which they had learned in their large families." (Autobiography, 6/20/04, p. 4)

Along the way Marie Andre drew the respect, admiration, trust and affection of many. Before she completed her tenure at St. Edward's, she had begun a new ministry as vicar for religious. Thanks to the invitation of Bishop John McCarthy, Marie Andre moved into new relationships with religious men and women of the archdiocese. There were numerous calls for her listening ear and action. Needy individuals and groups, religious communities experiencing loss and eclipse in changing times came to her door. She enabled resolution, change and, yes, even closure. She facilitated continuing education for religious in the diocese. Her wise and wide-ranging ministry as vicar covered 18 years.

By 2003, she realized it was time to retire. Brother Joel Giallanza summed up her service as vicar, "Everyone appreciates her calm nature, her sensitivity, her absolute

integrity, and her consistency in always treating people well." (IN OUR WORLD, "Sister Walsh retires after 62 Years of Ministry," March 2004, p. 15)

At the time of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, Brother Joel reiterated his deep appreciation for Marie Andre's presence in his life and in the diocese. "... [T]he truth is that many people are benefitting from what you accomplished. Thank you again." (Email, 5/14/2018) Her ministry has had lasting impact locally as well as in Texas and Samoa and elsewhere. Bishop John McCarthy himself wrote, "I can assure you that you did an extraordinary job ... You were a wonderful gift to the Church in Central Texas, and much appreciated in this part of the vineyard." ( Letter dated May 30, 2008) Bishop Gregory Aymond, successor to Bishop McCarthy, presented her with the Lumen Gentium Award designed "to acknowledge the contribution to the Church of laypersons outstanding for their faith life and their ministry."

Marie Andre voiced her appreciation: "I thank the dear Lord for so many faith-filled and fulfilling years in my 38 years in Texas and for all the wonderful colleagues who taught me so much about love, appreciation, and gratitude for each other." (Autobiography, 6/20/04, p. 9)

Here at the Motherhouse, Marie Andre's talents and skills quickly found a reception. Almost immediately, she became the keeper of the Motherhouse Chronicles and kept that post until age 99. When Marie Andre and I first shared a workroom in Archives, she spoke frequently of her desire to reconnect with her IHM classmates after her long tenure in Texas. I realized how important it was to her to build relationships with them and the others in the Motherhouse. Coming to know her and to appreciate how caring and alert she was, I knew she built connections quickly. But for her, I realized how important it was to deepen her measure of care for every person.

Donna Westley, IHM archivist at the time, observed, "During the first year of this assignment she [Marie Andre] visited and described all the departments and offices in the building, describing where each was located and what work was being done by individuals there."

When Rev. Gil Enderle, CSsR, came to research the life of our co-founder, Louis Florent Gillet, CSsR, Marie Andre assisted him in document translation. She had also translated the St. Andre School Curriculum brought from Belgium by Sister Teresa Persyn and adopted as foundational educational policy by the IHM congregation maintained for almost a hundred years.

Marie Andre served also on the Strategic Planning Committee for future uses of the Motherhouse, as well as on a Motherhouse entertainment committee and on the retreat planning committee. Such activities as wide reading, arm-chair activism, ready insertion into Marygrove College's Distinguished Alumnae search kept Marie Andre a busy, alert and committed community member. In her leisure, she read most of Maeve Binchey's novels and was thrilled when Binchey responded to her "fan" letter.

Yes. Marie Andre, relative, sister, friend. You gave yourself, responding to whatever the needs – as teacher, professor, administrator, counselor, faithful companion. We envision you among your parents and brother in the company of many dear friends, especially including Mother Teresa McGivney and Mother Anna Marie Grix. We call on you now as a woman of faith, now when you can see our loving God face to face; we reach out to you as our advocate and spokesperson uniting people of multiple languages. We embrace the bonds of our days and years with you. We will miss your warm and welcoming presence. We are confident that we will meet again.

Written by Joan Glisky, IHM, May 2020