If patience or long-suffering qualifies a person for sainthood, then Sister Lois certainly made the grade. After a long life of teaching and administration, Sister Lois retired to the Motherhouse in 1988 because of health problems and has lived in our Health Care Center for the last 15 years.

Lois was born on Jan. 23, 1927, the ninth of 10 children, in Rosebush, Mich. Her parents, John Winfield Morgan and Edna (Pixley) Morgan, were born in the Upper Peninsula and were married in Naubinway.

Soon after the family moved to Flint Lois’ mother died, leaving 10 children. Lois was 2 years old. Her father worked at the Buick factory and kept the family together with the help of the oldest girls. Three of them were married, and each one took one of the youngest to raise. According to Lois, they all lived near the family home and were very close. Despite their separation, Lois dearly loved her family. Her grandniece, Janine, said that at Morgan family reunions it was Lois who organized baseball games among the young boys and girls. Her nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews came to visit her at the Motherhouse regularly. Another grandniece, Bethany, was with Lois on Monday when she died. Lois attended St. Mary grade and high schools in Mount Morris and graduated in June 1945. She wrote that she thought about becoming an IHM but not seriously.

After working for three years for her father, who owned a store next to the family home, she finally answered God’s call and entered the congregation on July 1, 1948, receiving the name Rita Margaret at her reception on Jan. 2, 1949. Lois pronounced first vows on Jan. 1, 1951 and her final vows on Jan. 2, 1954. Lois’ early teaching assignments were in the primary grades at St. John, Monroe; St. Felicitas, Chicago; St. Bede, Southfield; St. Anne, Warren; Hall of the Divine Child, and Sacred Heart, Roseville.

In 1967, Sister returned to St. Anne School where she was principal for 11 years, and then to Sacred Heart, Pensacola, Fla., for 15 years - - long assignments.
Sister Judith Kaiser recalled that “St. Anne was the first Catholic school to enjoy shared time with the nearby public school.” Sister Judith lived with Sister Lois in two different places: St. Anne, Warren and Sacred Heart, Pensacola. Then both Lois and Judith ministered in Selma, Ala., but at different schools about an hour’s drive from each other. Judy related that they enjoyed their summer trips to and from Monroe, stopping at little towns along the way. She wrote that Lois is still missed in Alabama.

Sister Marguerite Gibbs, who lived with Lois in Pensacola, recalled that Lois was always looking for ways to assist children who needed help. She established a program called “Morning Star” that enabled physically and mentally handicapped children to find happiness in learning without pressure. “Workshop Way” was another program Lois inaugurated because she was convinced it helped children. So she took classes at Xavier University in New Orleans and supported teachers at Sacred Heart as they implemented the program. Sacred Heart was the first Catholic school in Pensacola to have computers in every classroom. Marguerite said that Lois spent hours making drapes for the school so that the windows could be darkened and teachers could show slides and videos. She even cleaned the school bathrooms because she thought the maintenance man didn’t do a good job. Marguerite concluded, “Everything was for others; she loved to cook, sew and play cards. Also the beach was a happy place for her; catching crabs or swimming in the beautiful white sandy Gulf waters, a Saturday event to which we all looked forward.”

Lois retired to the Motherhouse in 1998 because of ill health. She wrote in her autobiography, “I thank God for giving me the opportunity to live among so many great people.”

Sister Therese Michael, whose room was across from Lois, prayed often with her, usually the rosary. Lois loved those shared prayers. She and Therese Michael went to Mass together as often as Lois was able. Sister Therese Michael was a real prayer-partner for many years.

Not long ago, Lois became interested in ceramics. She would drive her scooter to the art room and loved creating angels. Sister Dorothy Eddy helped Lois complete her work as she put finishing touches on her angels.

Before her vision became a problem, Lois made many trips to the Library. She loved to read, and it was difficult to give up a favorite pastime. During the early
days of September Lois spoke of having to get ready for school and called to one of the nurses to “get a car so we can be on time.”

Sister Donna Prickel noticed that recently Lois began giving away articles in her room – books, scarves and ceramics – although she refrained from talking about dying. It was as though she knew the end was near but didn’t want to talk about it. And now, after having died peacefully Monday afternoon, Lois will be pursuing her favorite hobbies as she enjoys living with her God who was so close to her.

Written by Mary Laubacher, IHM
Presented by Marguerite Gibbs, IHM
Sept. 20, 2013