Sister Julia Ann Kline walked into heaven and saw God surrounded by hundreds of primary children who warmly welcomed her. She felt right at home. This newcomer was an IHM who taught primary grades for 57 years and loved every minute of it. Love of God came first, but education was second.

Sister’s parents, Francis Michael Kline and Leda Anna (Hughes) Kline, settled in Flint, Mich. There were seven boys in the family: Donald, Robert, Harold, Bernard, Edward, Walter and Joseph who died at birth. There were three girls: Mary, Ruperta and Julia Anne. Julia Anne was number six of ten and the last member of the family to die. One can imagine the amount of food it took to feed all those growing boys. Neighbors often saw Julia Anne pulling her red wagon loaded with bread from the local bakery. Many relatives lived nearby on farms and the family made weekly visits, returning home with meat, eggs and produce. Growing up with six brothers was fun but challenging. Julia Anne enjoyed movies, being part of a card club and going for bike hikes.

The Kline children attended St. Michael’s. Julia Anne wrote, “Being blessed with IHM sisters for our teachers, their example inspired me to want to follow their way of life. I spent many happy years as a choir member and service girl.” In June 1942, Julia Anne entered the convent in Monroe. Sister Dominica was her sponsor. Her reception, first profession and second profession followed the normal pattern.

Sister Julia Ann, her religious name being a modified version of her baptismal name, began teaching at St. Joseph’s in Monroe as a novice. Immediately she was a success. Teaching was a joy. The children learned without pressure and school was a happy place. Sister was, as they say, a born teacher.
In addition to Monroe, Sister Julia Ann taught in 10 other places ranging from Detroit to Battle Creek to Alabama. Teaching reviews were complimentary from all locations.

Sister’s long tenure in the Monroe area, 16 years, was significant for the IHM community and a time of personal love and devotion. Many of the junior sisters were privileged to have Sister Julia Ann for their student teaching. They found her a positive person who showed love, patience and compassion and who, above all, was a superb teacher. These young sisters were fortunate.

For five years, Sister Julia Ann ministered to the children at the Hall of the Divine Child. As she said, ”We taught the children during school hours, played with them after school, supervised them during dinner, prepared them at bedtime and dried their tears on their arrivals and departures on visiting or returning weekends.” She showed her motherliness and pride especially when the little guys were dressed for drills. She valued those years and claimed that despite the hard work they were personally rewarding to her. Perhaps growing up with six brothers made her feel at home in the Hall environment.

The many other years of ministry where teaching was dominant were filled with the usual church related activities such as liturgy reader, Eucharistic minister, visitor to the sick, religious educator and helping at parish functions such as beef dinners. One pastor noted the warm support of his pastorate that Sister had provided him. All of us know that being teachers did not mean only our time in front of the classroom.

In reading over her ministry statements, it is clear that development of her spiritual life was prominent. She was not one to talk religion, but she was faithful to her meditation times, Mass attendance, rosary, retreats, and spiritual reading.

To characterize Sister Julia Ann is not difficult because there is unanimity on her qualities: quiet, humble, self-effacing, generous, and dedicated to teaching, to her church, her community and her family. Conservative in both her outlook on the church and community helped her maintain a notable stability.

Sister’s many nieces and nephews were mentioned frequently and were always uppermost in her prayers. Her pride in her priestly nephew, Father Bob McGraw, was evident as every visitor to her room was introduced by way of his photo. Occasional visits to Ruperta’s home held special joy for her in her time in Health Care.
Acknowledgement is made of the close personal and working relationship of Sister Julia Ann and Sister Marie Evelyn Dunn. They experienced 28 years of a long, devoted and helpful friendship. They were both fortunate. Sister Marie Evelyn Dunn was particularly dutiful and took loving care of Sister when she was assigned to third floor, taking her twice daily to play cards, rummy or just to visit.

Sister Julia Ann was most grateful to the health care professionals. Their medical care was only a part of what they offered. Their love and compassion was especially obvious in the long days of decline. You, nurses and aides have a great reward waiting for you.

Besides capable health care, the Pastoral ministers gave peace in being present for Sister. The support provided to the relatives and friends is immeasurable. Thank you.

Father McGraw has been accommodating and kept in touch regarding Sister’s situation over the years. Thank God he is here today to provide Sister’s farewell. She is proud of you, Father!

It is difficult to see such a powerfully quiet woman slip away. Her days of confusion are over. Her example is here to stay. Her acceptance of God’s Will is her gift to us. Enjoy God and any little ones who enter heaven early, our dear Sister Julia Ann.

Written by Sister Marie Hopkins, IHM
February 15, 2013
Delivered by Sr. Joyce Durosko