

**Remembering Rose Xavier Dunn, IHM**  
**Nov. 15, 1908 – Jan. 21, 2014**



God called Sister home on Jan. 21, 2014. Sister is the second oldest IHM to die. The patience and kindness of the HCC staff was exceptionally shown as Sister's illness progressed. They continually showed their love for this fragile woman. Her brother, Jack, noted their attention quite often and knew she had loving care.

Sister Rose Xavier Dunn was a perfect lady: gentle, quiet, unassuming, efficient. Most of us would never guess that she was the second oldest of 15 children.

Sister's parents, Robert Dunn and Agnes Livernois Dunn, were born in Carleton, Mich., and the family never strayed far from this part of the state. Viola Mary, who later became Sister Rose Xavier, was born on Nov. 15, 1908. Jack, her only living sibling, from Belleville, Michigan visited Sister regularly. They talked almost daily by phone. Sister appreciated those visits and hearing news about the family. As would be expected, there are numerous nieces and nephews from the original large family. Her siblings are Genevieve, Joseph, Evelyn, Donald, Irene, Robert Jr., Helen, Kenneth, Loretta, Frank, Clara, Jack, Pearl and Rosemary.

When asked what it was like to be reared with so many siblings, Sister said it was fun and that her memory is of a house constantly filled with people and bustling with activity. Her parents had many friends and relatives who were always welcome and who visited regularly. Mrs. Dunn was a good cook and the company appreciated her skill. While the adults played cards, the children enjoyed outdoor activities. Easter was always spent at Grandmother Dunn's house in Carleton and was a special time. Viola's nephew, Bob Elka and his wife Mary had a spacious home in Willis, Michigan and it was the gathering place where the multiple relatives met over the years. Many stories were shared and the children got to interact with the extended family.

The Dunn family moved a couple times as Mr. Dunn advanced in employment. In Belleville, Michigan their large, beautiful family home was located on the banks of the Huron River. Viola attended school in Belleville from the first to the sixth grade. The family then moved to Saline, Michigan where Viola finished grade school and attended ninth grade at Milan High.

During the summer of 1923, Viola's Aunt Mary Stackmeyer of Monroe, Michigan was influential in getting a tuition grant for her to work at the Hall of the Divine Child for her tuition so she could attend the Academy. Viola and a couple other students lived at the Hall and assisted Sister Ann Vincent and Sister Ethelbert with domestic chores and other regular classroom duties. The students hiked across the campus to attend their classes at the Academy and back again to the Hall for the remainder of the day when they did their work assignments. Sister's father visited her and took her home for holidays while Mrs. Dunn stayed home and cared for her large family. This situation lasted only one year because Viola was encouraged by Sister Clare, the directress, to enter the postulate. She did so on June 22, 1925.

Twenty-six other young ladies entered that summer and the group became very close friends and enjoyed fun times together down through the years. Many of us remember this particular class providing fun and laughs during our summer Hall days. Sister's best friends were Sister Ann Frances Bodiley and Sister Rose Estelle Kissane. In referring to this close friendship, Sister Ann Frances facetiously referred to herself as the thorn between two roses.

Viola received the habit on Dec. 30, 1925, and was given the name Rose Xavier. Her first and final profession followed in the usual order. Sister was the last living member of her class. She knew this close group awaited her in heaven and she anticipated a joyous reunion.

Mission assignments were many and varied. She went to her first mission, St. Gregory, by way of a trolley car. Her other schools were: St. Matthew and St. Catherine in Detroit; St. Mary, Akron (where she was missioned three different times); Sacred Heart, Roseville; St. Bede, Southfield and St. Thomas Aquinas in Detroit. Teaching was predominantly in the junior high. Along the way, Sister received a B.A. from Marygrove College and an M.A. from Wayne State.

When Sister Mary Patrick was Superior in Ohio, the sisters had an unusual experience. Sister Mary Patrick decided they would return to Monroe by train which they boarded at midnight. Twenty sisters in habits entering the train made quite a sight. The train was carrying military personnel and Sister Rose Xavier sat next to a sailor who told her he had attended St. Charles in Detroit. What a small world.

Sister's teaching career ended when she was assigned to be attendance officer and later bookstore manager at Immaculata High School in Detroit. She also assisted Sister Ann Matthew, the principal, in her administrative duties. The faculty and staff lived in the Immaculata Convent until the community made it the formation house. The residents were free to choose a place to live. Some went to Gesu, some to other nearby convents or to Marygrove. Sister Rose Xavier chose Marygrove and accepted a position in the College Continuing Education office doing clerical work. This arrangement lasted from 1971-1991. Sister acknowledged that this was a particularly satisfying and happy time in her life. Her coworkers, even today, speak of the quiet, efficient work that Sister did while with them and how her sense of humor kept them in a good mood.

Besides working in continuing education, Sister was very active in the convent helping with many jobs. Her graciousness was most evident in the role of hospitality. Many sisters remember her kindness to them when they visited. Sister Rose Xavier would make sure all their needs were fulfilled often anticipating them to the surprise of the guest.

Retirement began on July 13, 1991, when Sister came home to Monroe. She first served as a receptionist in the CBO office. A second assignment was assisting Sister Mary Robert Gilloe taking care of sisters' needs in health care. Opening and reading mail to patients was her main job which she lovingly did for eight years until foot surgery forced her to retire for good.

Sister had leisure time now for prayer and the various activities offered to the Motherhouse residents. On her commitment forms, she often mentions devoting prime time to prayer for local and world needs and for the promotion of justice and peace. She kept up with the news through CNN and reading bulletins and the daily paper. She read aloud for some of us as we lost our reading sight.

A summation Sister herself gave was: “My 70 plus years have proved to have been a true call to love God and my neighbor serving His Church in my missions and ministries. My large family has been a deep source of my inspiration of God and my neighbor as each (family member) carried out his or her own call even in times of tragedies and joys.” Despite a sensitive constitution, Sister lived a long life and was able to walk on her own, wait on herself and interact with others right until near the end. How fortunate she was!

Sister’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday was a very special occasion that she insisted be quiet and private. Her wishes were honored and administrators and friends dropped in during the day with blessings, good wishes, flowers and small gifts. Her relatives sent congratulations and a few surprised her with visits. The day was perfect for her. She mentioned many times how grateful she was to God for her extraordinary life and to the community for the splendid care given to her through the years and especially during her days in Liguori.

Sister Rose Xavier, when you entered heaven you must have had quite a reception from your large family, from your close classmates and all the other IHMs awaiting you. We will miss your lovely smile and your gracious presence. May you rest in the peace and joy of our loving God.

Written by Sister Marie Hopkins, IHM

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