Marianne was born on Feb. 10, 1932, in Chicago. Her parents were Michael and Margaret Catherine (Scanlon) Marrin, both of Chicago. Marianne was the oldest sister of Margaret (Peggy) and Kathryn (Kay). The girls attended school at St. Felicitas where they had IHM Sisters, and Aquinas High, where they were taught by Adrian Dominican Sisters. They were a close Irish family.

Their home was right next door to the sisters' house, so close that they could hear the sisters talking on a Saturday morning at breakfast, when the girls were trying to sleep. Often a sister would send Marianne home with a question, “Would Thursday be a good time to go grocery shopping?” Her mother would take Sister Cyprian grocery shopping. They shopped at Hi-Low’s, where Marianne worked as a teenager. Of course, she got teased about that. And the girls at school knew just what groceries the sisters bought.

Marianne’s mother was close to the priests, also. In fact, Monsignor James Walsh, (the pastor) was a longtime friend of the family. Marianne’s mother was volunteer sacristan and volunteer manager of the priests' busy ‘sacramental’ schedules. She brought home the sacristy laundry and washed it, and the girls were drafted to iron it.

A funny anecdote shows the closeness of the priests, sisters and families in this Irish neighborhood. Many years later, when the monsignor’s dog died, Sisters Marcianna, (Dorothy Joyce) and Nora Marie (Duggan) were charged with helping to bury the dog. The Fitzmaurice boys, (Sister Harriet Fitzmaurice’s nephews) dug the hole. You can be sure that old dog got a proper Gaelic sendoff.

On Aug. 22, 1950, the family drove Marianne to Monroe to enter the IHM community. A year later she was received into the community and took the name Sister Catherine Michael, after her parents. She made her first vows on Aug. 15, 1953, and finished studying for her Bachelor of Arts in 1954. At Sister Mary Patrick’s insistence, her class was the first to graduate from Marygrove College with the lay students. Marianne’s first mission was St. Joseph in Monroe in 1954, where she taught first grade. After a year there, she was sent to Our Lady of Help, Detroit for a year, then on to St. Peter in Deland, Fla., for three years. Marianne continued teaching primary grades at St. John’s in Benton Harbor and St. Philip’s in Battle Creek. In 1963 she went to St. Thomas Aquinas in Detroit, where she taught grades three and four.

In 1964 Marianne’s family was delighted to hear that she was to be sent to St. Rene in Chicago, where she taught mostly grade five, with some exchanges with other teachers. She always got along well with the teachers; they shared projects, good materials and their love for teaching. Marianne was a very good teacher and she had good personal relations with the students.
It was back to Michigan in 1964, where Marianne was initiated into grades seven and eight at St. Patrick, Wyandotte and also received her master's degree in Education from Marygrove College. The very next year it was back to Florida where she taught grades seven and eight. Marianne’s parents used to visit her, wherever she was missioned. They, of course, loved to go to Florida, where many happy times were spent together. While in Florida, Marianne enjoyed driving to Fort Meyers with friends and staying at the motel owned by Sister Trudy Baltes’ sister and brother-in-law. On rainy days they would sit around the table for hours and solve the world’s problems.

In 1973 Marianne was assigned to Matthew’s School in Detroit, where she taught grades six and seven. She loved teaching and strongly believed in the Catholic schools as a way to enable the students to become their best selves and to grow in their faith. All of this experience in so many schools prepared Marianne for her next challenge. She became principal at St. Thomas Aquinas in Detroit. This was her second time at St. Thomas – this time she stayed seven wonderful years. Marie and Marge Sweeney and Mary Ann Markel and Marianne would go to the principals’ meetings together. Afterward they would sit around and talk ‘principal’ for hours.

Marianne taught at St. Brigid School in Detroit from 1985 to 1989. Then she moved back to Illinois, to St. Christopher School in Midlothian. Of course, her family approved of this. She was at St. Christopher from 1989 until 2002.

When Marianne was last in Chicago, she and her sisters attended Sacred Heart Parish where they were very active. Marianne ran a part of the religious education program and Kathryn did some work in the church. When Cardinal Cody closed the church, the sisters were among those lay persons who worked hard to support the ongoing life of the parish.

When Marianne fell down a flight of stairs, her health began to deteriorate. Family and friends saw a significant change in her. Always a very friendly and outgoing person, she became withdrawn and isolated and neglected to care for herself. She was encouraged to come home to Monroe and after some time at the Motherhouse, she moved into Health Care and then into Memory Care. After a year residing in Memory Care, Marianne was joined by classmate, Sister Jean Burbo. We then saw Marianne come back to her former self, filled with compassion and warmth toward Jean, as she made sure Jean knew just what to do and where to go. It was so refreshing!

When Marianne’s sister, Peg, died in 2009, Sisters Nora Duggan and Jane Farrell drove Marianne to the funeral in Chicago. Marianne and Kathryn were deeply grateful.

Little by little Marianne seemed to fade away again. Sometimes we saw her sitting up, seemingly alert and responding to our greetings. At other times she appeared passive and withdrawn.
Marianne loved poetry, dearly loved all kinds of books and so loved to be read to. When someone read to Marianne in her last difficult times, the reader read it slowly and stopped. Surprisingly, Marianne added softly, “Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen,” to close the prayer.

Who of us can understand the silent work of God in our depths as we await the mystery of death? A poem, written by Helen Oprysek, IHM, was found in one of Marianne’s books that captures that thought:

God comes most often
without fanfare or splendor
into our hearts …
a simple imperceptible coming
like sunsets
cast in quiet shades of abalone on
the jagged frozen shores
of our hidden selves.

Written by Roberta Richmond, IHM, and Nora Duggan, IHM, April 20, 2015

Delivered by Roberta Richmond, IHM
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