

Obituary



Sister Ann Christine Charon, 88, died Tuesday, June 21, 2016, at her home, the IHM Motherhouse in Monroe. Sister Ann Christine was the 12th of 13 children in the family of Paul and Julia (Lozon) Charron.

She was born on Aug. 4, 1927, in Dover Township, Ontario, Canada. Being of French descent, she was baptized Marie Edesse, understood as “Marie Edith” in English. Marie Edith attended Holy Cross grade and high schools in Marine City, Mich. After graduation, she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of

Mary in Monroe in 1945 and received the religious name, Sister Ann Christine. She recently celebrated her 70th Jubilee as an IHM.

Sister Ann Christine earned a bachelor’s degree from Marygrove College and a master’s degree in education from Wayne State University, Detroit. She served as an elementary school teacher at Christ the King, Detroit; St. Michael, Monroe, Mich.; St. Thomas, Ann Arbor, Mich.; St. Mark, Cleveland; and Colegio de la Merced, Cayey, Puerto Rico. She served as principal of St. Michael the Archangel in Miami for five years before returning to Michigan.

In Port Huron, Mich., Sister Ann Christine entered a new ministry as manager, administrator and then co-director of Marydale Center, a home for senior citizens. Marydale was a ministry she thoroughly enjoyed and was proud of the staff’s accomplishments under her direction. This ministry lasted 25 years. Sister Ann Christine retired in Port Huron in 2004 and continued to work part-time at Marydale and also as a pastoral minister for St. Mary Parish, Port Huron. She retired to the IHM Motherhouse in 2009 and volunteered her services as able.

Remembering

Some years ago, Sister Ann Christine wrote:

As I look back on where I have been and what I have done, I know God’s grace and guidance have been with me, especially when I realize that, if I had stayed in the small town of Marine City, I never would have been able to accomplish what I have done. It was the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters at Holy Cross School – and beyond those years – that made my life

as full as it has been. My home background also played a big part in my ability to work with the young and with the older generation – joyfully, generously, and with love.

Ann Christine was attracted to ministry with young children and with the elderly because of her childhood experience. She was the 12th child in a family of 13 children. Her parents, Paul and Lea Julia (Lozon) Charron, were Canadians of French descent. Some of the children were born in Canada and some in the United States. In the early years of their marriage, the Charrons lived in River Rouge where they enjoyed the support and love of their Charron relatives. Paul Charron had a good job and the family a lovely home. During those years, eight of their children were born.

However, heeding the advice of a medical doctor about the benefits of country air, which would improve the health of one of their young sons, the Charrons moved back to rural Ontario where they had to do very hard farm work in order to provide for their large family. Sister Ann Christine was born in Canada on Aug. 4, 1927, and baptized Edith.

When little Edith was 17 months old, her mother died in childbirth. The day of the funeral, her mother's oldest sister, Philomena, known as Aunt Minnie, took Edith across the St. Clair River to Marine City – becoming her second mother. Aunt Minnie had no children of her own but earned her living by caring for the poor children brought to her home by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. She also cared for a blind friend and for her elderly brother.

This experience as a child had a profound influence on Sister Ann Christine. Later in life, she wrote: "It was Aunt Minnie's compassionate and loving way with both the young and the old that inspired me to follow in her ways in teaching and in my work (with the elderly) at Marydale Center."

Growing up in Marine City, in a house right behind the church, Ann Christine attended Holy Cross School for 12 years – and during those years ran innumerable errands for the IHM Sisters. In her senior year, she considered becoming a nurse, but inspired by her IHM teachers and by Father John Hogan, a young priest at Holy Cross, she decided to become an IHM.

When Mother Teresa McGivney came to Holy Cross Convent for her annual visit, Edith talked with her about entering. She quickly told Mother Teresa that she was afraid she could not become an IHM Sister because she was not an American citizen. She had come to the United States without any legal entry papers. (Remember, she was 17-months old when she crossed the border with Aunt Minnie.) Mother Teresa waved aside her concern and assured Edith that legal citizenship would be completed.

Edith Charron entered the IHM congregation in the Centennial Year of 1945. Received into the novitiate in January 1946, she pronounced her first vows in January 1948 and immediately began teaching at Christ the King School in Detroit.

For the next 20 years, she was an elementary school teacher in grades two through eight – three of those years in Puerto Rico. In 1969, Sister Mary Kinney asked her to become the principal of St. Michael School in Miami. For the next five years, in addition to providing leadership as principal, she made significant improvements in the lay teachers' salaries and in the school building and in the convent, located on the top floor of the school.

In the early 1970s, at the invitation of Father John Hogan, the founder of all the Catholic social institutions serving the people of the Port Huron area, Ann Christine served four summers as assistant to the director of Marydale Center for the elderly. In 1974, she became the full-time assistant director and in 1981, the administrator. In those 35 years, she enlarged the facility and made numerous improvements, providing greater comfort and more beauty for the residents. Most of all she created a real home for elderly women and men. In addition to helping cook the meals, if need be, she was nurse, janitor, counselor, pastoral minister and fundraiser. These words were written about her at the time of her retirement as administrator of Marydale Center:

Sr. Ann Christine's achievements in her position as Administrator of Marydale Center ... are countless. Sr. Ann is lovingly known ... as the "Mother Theresa" of Port Huron. She carries the vision of building and maintaining a beautiful, safe and loving environment for the residents, but also is a hands-on person often driving them to doctor appointments, providing a caring hand when they are ill, or just listening to them and

providing companionship. Many of the residents of Marydale have no family; Sr. Ann Christine becomes their family. She is a friend to all.

In her IHM Book of Life page, she herself wrote: "I have tried to make this my goal – to bring God's love, His peace, His joy to all the people I work with and for and all those my path crosses each day. The world needs God's love reflected through us who have been chosen to be His ambassadors."

In all the years I have known her, I never once heard Sister Ann Christine complain of the heartache she must have suffered because of the death of her mother when she was only 17 months old and the death of her father a year and a half later. Nor did she ever speak regretfully of the poverty and hard work of her childhood. With deep faith, every experience and circumstance of her life made her more compassionate, loving and committed to the service of others.

Her parents must have been remarkable people, for their children carried love for one another with them throughout life. Although Sister Ann Christine's brothers and sisters were scattered among relatives after the death of their father, they remained lovingly united with one another. Sister Ann Christine attributed this to her oldest sister, Rose, who kept in touch with each of them and helped them keep in touch with one another.

I was blessed to have lived with Sister Ann Christine in Port Huron for four years. Her deep faith, her prayerfulness, her warm and loving ways with people, her leadership and selfless service were an inspiration to me. Her friendship was one of God's greatest gifts to me.

Written by Mary Jo Maher, IHM, July 2010

Delivered by Margaret Babcock, IHM, June 24, 2016