

## Obituary



Sister Audrey Bushell, IHM, 90, died Friday, Feb. 12, in the IHM Health Care Center.

Sister Audrey was born on Feb. 17, 1925 in Detroit to Aaron and Margaret (Griffin) Bushell and was baptized, Audrey Cecilia. She attended St. Rose Grade School and High School in Detroit and graduated in 1943. That same year, she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe and received the religious name of Sister Vinciana.

Sister Audrey earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College and taught elementary grades in Michigan at St. John and Hall of the Divine Child, Monroe; Saints Peter and Paul, Ionia; Holy Redeemer and Christ the King, Detroit; and also at St. Felicitas and St. Rene in Chicago. While in the Detroit area, she studied art at Wayne State University and earned a Master of Education degree. She went on to teach high school at St. Mary of Redford, Detroit; and Brother Rice, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., and spent more than 20 years teaching, mainly art.

Sister Audrey retired to the Motherhouse in 1993 and remained active by volunteering in the Archives office and offering her creative talents to members of the Motherhouse community. She entered the IHM Health Care Center in 2006.

## Remembering

On Audrey's *Book of Life* page, she quotes Jeremiah 29: 11-14.

The Gracious One says, 'I know well the plans I have in mind for you; plans for your welfare, not for woe; plans to give you a future full of hope.' The Loving One says, 'When you call me, I will listen to you. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you.'

Audrey's life was one of seeking the Loving One in all events and in all her activities.

Audrey's parents, Aaron Patrick and Margaret Cecilia (Griffin) Bushell originally from Pittsburgh, moved to St. Rose Parish in Detroit, where they raised their three children. Audrey Cecilia, the middle child, was born on Feb. 17, 1925. Her older brother was Aaron, called Patrick, and her younger brother was Robert Joseph. An early sorrow for Audrey was the death of Bob, who died in a swimming accident at the family cottage in Lexington while Audrey was in the Novitiate.

Family was always very dear to Audrey: her parents, her brother Pat, his wife Doris and their seven daughters and her cousins, LaVerne Brown, Elinor Brown and LaVerne's son, Peter. She was so proud of her Irish heritage.

On July 1, 1943, after graduating from St. Rose High School, Audrey entered the IHM Sisters at Monroe. She was received and given the religious name of Sister Vinciana on Jan. 2, 1944. She professed her first vows on Jan. 2, 1946 and made final profession three years later.

Audrey's ministry experience spanned nearly 50 years, as teacher in both elementary and high schools and as principal in Detroit and at St. Felicitas and St. Rene in Chicago. Her mother and dad visited her there so often that Audrey joked that the car knew the way and could go by its self.

During summers, Audrey completed a degree in biology at Marygrove College and a master's in art education at Wayne State University. She taught art, religion and clothing at St. Mary of Redford High School for nine years, before establishing the Art Department at Brother Rice High School, where she taught for 15 years. This time was a high point in her life. She loved teaching and said, "Hopefully, I can make students aware of their creative gifts."

Audrey was especially effective teaching teenage boys. She combined tough love, discipline [the Art Room was always in perfect order at the end of class] and humor. Here is one of many examples: As she stopped to help a Brother Rice senior with his drawing, he said, looking at her hands, "Sister, are those liver spots?" Audrey stared at him calmly and intoned: "Are you intending to graduate?" "Gosh, Sister, he replied. Those are the most beautiful freckles I ever saw."

During those years at Bishop Rice, she also cared for her mother and father in their declining health.

In 1993, Audrey decided it was time to retire to the Motherhouse in Monroe because she wanted to be healthy enough to contribute her services there. In that final year at Brother Rice, she was awarded the Teacher of the Year Award from CASA, the Catholic Association for Secondary Administration. At the graduation ceremony, she was presented with the Edmund Ignatius Rice Medallion awarded for her many years of Christian Service at Brother Rice High School, Bloomfield Hills, Mich. The citation reads:

Sister Audrey Bushell, you have been a light in our lives for the past fifteen years. Each school day, your smile graces our hallways and warms our hearts. We see

your eyes gleam expressively as they witness the creation of a student “Masterpiece” or as you relate the account to your fellow faculty members. Your manner is unassuming, and yet your presence among us is very genuine. We cherish you for what you represent to our family. Your willingness to share your gifts of knowledge, creativity, compassion and understanding with students, parents, alumni, faculty and staff is evident and so characteristic of you since your arrival here. For all of your contributions spiritually, socially and scholastically over the past 49 years, we now thank you from the depths of our hearts and wish you many years of health and happiness in your new ministry, retirement. May God continue to bless you as He has blessed us with you.

Audrey’s folder has many tributes and expressions of gratitude from her students over the years. One from a former student at St. Mary of Redford recalls: “Sister Audrey Bushell is one of the most important people in my past. I still have pictures from our art class. ... The memories of her and the classes I took with her are still my most pleasant memory of all my high school days. From basic drawing to clay and other media, she was an inspiration and joy to be with, even though I, often, was not. Thank you, Sister, for helping make me the man I am today.”

Audrey jokingly referred to her retirement as her “recycled life.” She spent 10 years volunteering in the IHM Archives and loved the work. Her commitment form reads, “Jesus is the center and meaning of our life together, and His Spirit is the bond of our unity. I find such a spirit working together as a member of the Archives staff, helping to preserve the history of our community to pass on to those who follow us.” Her artistic talents were also put to good use in planning and executing archival displays.

In 2006, Audrey moved to the Health Care Center for assistance, but still remained active, painting and enjoying life with the care of her good friend, Sister Margaret Ann Henige. Her move to Memory Care in 2011 was difficult as she began her final years of fading memory.

We, her classmates and friends, remember Audrey as a woman of many talents and gracious qualities. She was a faithful friend. She was a quiet and private person. She was full of fun and a gentle tease. She could clown around and mimic anyone, keeping a straight face as the rest of us laughed. Many times her humor seemed a way to keep hurts and sorrows hidden. She was simple but always elegant in her dress. She was a model of letting go, clearing out anything she hadn’t used in a year. She was a perfect seamstress and generous with her gifts.

Audrey was not just an art teacher. She was a true artist. Her paintings around the house testify to the professional level of her works. And she would never sell a painting. They were always and only given as gifts.

For our 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee program, Audrey designed a cover depicting a woman standing with arms uplifted in prayerful praise. She used this same symbol on her *Book of Life* page, and we see it here on our booklet. It is a beautiful and fitting image for her life. As are the words of Jeremiah:

The Loving One says, 'When you call Me, I will listen to you. Yes, when you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me with you.'

We rejoice with you, Audrey. You are now with God!

Written and delivered by Marie Gabriel Hungerman, IHM  
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