

Obituary



Sister Mary Anne (Lucinda) Humbel, IHM, 85, died Saturday, Jan. 16 in the IHM Health Care Center.

Sister Mary Anne was one of three children born to John and Lucinda (Laux) Humbel. Born on April 2, 1930, in Detroit, she was christened Mary Anne. Sister Mary Anne attended St. Matthew Grade School and Dominican High School in Detroit. After graduation, she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe and received the name Sister Lucinda.

Sister Mary Anne earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College and a Master of Arts from Loyola University, Chicago followed by a Master of Arts in education from DePaul University. Her early teaching ministry focused on elementary school students in Michigan at St. Matthew, Flint; St. Gregory, Detroit; St. Philip, Battle Creek; and St. John, Benton Harbor. While studying at DePaul University, Sister Mary Anne served as a guidance counselor at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School, Westchester, Ill., and remained there for 15 years. She continued in counseling and teaching at Mother McCauley High School, Chicago, for more than 20 years, while residing in Berwyn, Ill. Sister Mary Anne retired to the IHM Motherhouse in 2012.

Remembering

"Good things come in small packages" was truly the case with the diminutive Sister Mary Anne Humbel, who, throughout 85 years, 67 of them as an IHM Sister, crafted an amazing life. Through the sharing of her love, fidelity and giftedness, she was a blessing to family, friends, our IHM community and to those she served in her ministry in the Church and beyond. And all of this was done under the umbrella of one of her favorite Latin words: FIAT. "Be it done unto me ..." an expression of the acceptance of God's plan for her.

In her page in the "IHM Book of Life," she writes, "Summarizing a lifetime on one page - no easy task. So much of life is evolutionary, or from my faith perspective, God's continuous intervention in the lives of His Church and His creatures. Mary's words in St. Luke's Gospel, 'Be it done unto me'... [and] her Magnificat have been the inspiration of my life."

Born to John and Lucinda (Laux) Humbel in Detroit in 1930, Mary Anne was named after the Blessed Mother because her mother had prayed to our Lady for a child. The family was later blessed with two more children, Jane and John. They attended St. Matthew School in Detroit and were taught by IHMs. The girls went on to the newly built Dominican High School. But in 1948, it was to the IHM that Mary Anne felt the Lord “was pulling” her. Leaving home was difficult and she thought, as we all did in those days, that she could never return home. She writes, “... it was really hard for me. [but] That’s the way it was.” FIAT

Mary Anne had learned to play the piano as a young girl and loved music. So it was a happy day when she began her ministry as an IHM, teaching music at St. Matthew in Flint. Her second mission was St. Gregory in Detroit, where she also taught music. When classroom teachers were needed, it was time for another FIAT. So in 1959, she transitioned to the classroom to teach religion and what would become her signature subject, Latin.

After then having served as choral, religion and Latin teacher, guidance counselor, as well a stint as principal (St. John, Benton Harbor), she left Michigan in 1969 for Illinois. She served at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School (Westchester) and finally Mother McCauley High School (Chicago), where she continued to teach classical Latin until her retirement in 2012. You may remember the student lament, “Latin is the deadest language, dead as it can be. First, it killed the Romans and now it’s killing me.” But no such words would come from her students who revered her for her creativity in making this language come alive for 21st-century learners. When a friend, Janice Hinsdale, expressed concern over the difficulties her boys were having with Latin, Sister was only too happy to assist them, with typical success.

Her knowledge was broad and deep, her teaching skills exceptional. When called upon as a substitute, she conducted the class with ease. The students respected her and often anticipated a request or direction before she even had to say anything.

When she retired from the classroom, Mary Anne delved into a new volunteer ministry, literacy training for adults. She was thorough in her preparation for this ministry, had wonderful stories of the commitment of the students learning English and enjoyed the companionship of her co-workers.

She loved the Chicago area, the people, the opportunities for service and cultural activities. A great lover of all music and an accomplished musician, sister sang with the elite choir at Holy Name Cathedral and played the organ at local parishes for Sunday liturgies. When she became aware of the growing Puerto-Rican/Hispanic need for a Spanish Mass, she studied Spanish language at night school and played for that liturgy too. This enriched and added a new dimension to her life. She had a deep love for the civic opera. You may recall that she sang in the Motherhouse choir and in Handel's *Messiah*.

Sister Mary Anne often participated with a group of teachers who would perform at McCormick Place in Chicago. At one of the practices, sister noticed that the conductor seemed upset. Something was just not right. She quietly approached a member whose strong voice, (and seating in the wrong section) caused some of the other singers to misfire on their parts. She suggested a seat in a section where the singer might be more comfortable. When the conductor returned to try the piece again, he was amazed at the change. When he found out the reason, he said, "Who caught that?" (Hand raised) Sister Mary Anne!

Sister was very well-traveled. Over the years, she journeyed across the globe with her brother to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, England, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Turkey, Greece, Russia and western Asia. She noted, "I've been on most continents and we have even touched the Arctic Circle. I know we did not get to Antarctica." Germany was a favorite because she got to know her sister-in-law's family.

Co-workers and friends in the Chicago area remember how important community was to her. She was quick to respond to an invitation to get together for a local gathering, a holiday party or a show and dinner. She was a great conversationalist and very much in-the-know on current happenings in the local and national scenes, with definite opinions on the political landscape. She never came to these gatherings empty-handed.

When her dear friend, Sister Pat Rowland, a fellow musician, was dying of cancer, Sister Mary Anne cared for her; the hospital bed right there in the living room. She said that of the loss, of the fight and of the cross of facing Pat's impending death, "only my faith, FIAT, and the support of so many friends kept me going."

In 2012, she relocated to Monroe earlier than she had expected due to illness. Although she wanted to return to Chicago to personally close her apartment, she did not dwell on this. FIAT! Instead, she looked on the bright side and noted that she would enjoy being close to her family and watching the youngest generation grow.

Sister Mary Anne concludes her page in the "IHM Book of Life," "... although so many persons and events have influenced my life, it has been the 'losses,' my own and those of others, that have made me re-focus and remember, 'Be it done unto me according to your word'..." She continues, "The community I entered in 1948 was far different from the IHMs today in organization, appearance, etc. I pray, however, that these less important 'details' do not lessen its genuine strength – the inspiration that its members give to the Church and to all God's people. We are an important part of the Whole."

Because she was a very private person and did not talk about herself, some of us may never have suspected the beauty and adventure that was Sister Mary Anne's life, but if you took the time to observe this gracious woman, you had to know, she was special.

Compliments flow easily from those who knew her best, lived or worked with her: a gentle person, so kind, a radiant smile, loved her ministry, very thoughtful, deep thinker, unassuming, so well versed in so many fields, so adaptable, a strong woman, such an effective teacher, never one to make waves but always doing her part, specialized in behind the scenes support, ever ready to serve, to help, to share her talents.

Yes, good things come in small packages, and now you know the rest of the story of this tiny woman, so small you could hardly see her over the sides of her wheelchair as she came to Mass every morning. The same little woman who, when she drove her big black hatchback, caused people to say, "Is anyone driving that car? I can't see anybody." That somebody was a little giant in her faith, her intelligence, her generosity and her giftedness. We thank God for her. May she now sing with the angels.

Written and delivered by Loretta Schroeder, IHM
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