

Obituary

Sister Ann Currier, IHM, 91, died Thursday, Feb.13, at IHM Senior Living Community, Monroe.

Ann Gustava Currier was born in Battle Creek, Mich., on May 16, 1928, to Augustus Bernard and Irene Mabel (Allen) Currier. The family was raised in St. Phillip parish where young Ann attended school. After graduation from St. Phillip High School, she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, and received the religious name Sister Agnes Cecil. Sister Ann celebrated her 70th jubilee as an IHM Sister in 2017.



Sister Ann was a dedicated teacher for 20 years at St. Rose, Holy Redeemer and Holy Trinity, Detroit; Hall of the Divine Child, Monroe; and St. Mary, Marshall, Mich. She coordinated religious education for neighborhood children. The call to serve the poor and marginalized became her life's work. In 1972, she began as pastoral minister at Holy Trinity and served and advocated for many neighbors in need throughout her 30-year tenure.

She earned a bachelor's degree at Marygrove College and a master's degree in education at Wayne State University. Sister Ann served those around her, wherever she found herself – in a Detroit parish, on a university campus, local neighborhoods, the Monroe community and the IHM Sisters' campus. Her dedication and selfless service to the community was recognized by the Archdiocese of Detroit, Dignity in Action Committee, Trinity Continuing Care Services and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Sister Ann retired to the IHM Motherhouse in 2004 and remained active in her religious community and caring for the campus. She was instrumental in planting an annual display of spring flowers and, in later years, recruiting others to assist. She continued to serve those in need in the Monroe community.

Remembering

For more than 70 years, we have known Sister Ann Currier as an IHM Sister companion sharing our faith journey. We have heard the tales of her tireless ministries to many. Some of these accounts were quite startling. Here was a

woman who kept a crowbar in her car and used it occasionally. Did she not pry open a door in a Corktown senior apartment when a woman's friends had not seen her for several days? And was it not Ann who herself washed another impoverished woman's wounds because the hospital nurses could not bring themselves to do it? Here was someone who enabled several children with cerebral palsy to walk and to learn to read.

In these later years, we've marveled as she and her sister Alys beautified the courtyard with thousands of tulips and flowers of every kind and stunning beauty. We witnessed her with Alys and Josephine Sferrella with other friends and volunteers restoring St. Joseph Island to dignity and beauty. Even when and where many thought she should stop, she kept on going and going and going – an IHM Energizer Bunny.

In 2001, she was honored by the Dignity in Action Committee. This group of community leaders organized to meet needs of seniors in Continuing Care Service Communities. I thought the committee honoring her steady, unflinching ministry in Corktown, captured Ann's life well in a poem titled "Autumn Wisdom" by James Miller:

You have been singled out and named.
You have been given your own place and your own time on earth.
You have been formed as one part of the grand plan for all creation.
You are unlike anyone else who has ever lived.
You have come trailing clouds of glory –
 A glory that comes not from who you are, but from WHOSE you are;
 A glory that comes not from what you've accomplished,
 But from what is being accomplished IN YOU!
You have come – trailing clouds of glory from God.
Even you.
ESPECIALLY YOU.

Ann herself offered explanation for the thrust of her life when she said, "I get my strength in the Eucharist." More than once she affirmed, "Whatever good I have been able to do has been a gift of God and nurtured by the faith of my mother." This was her recurring refrain. In addition, she attributed the continuing support of the IHM congregation as vital to her years of ministry.

Born May 16, 1928, in Battle Creek, Mich., Ann was the seventh child of Augustus and Irene (Allen) Currier. Ann was one in a family of 11 children. Nine grew to adulthood: Mary Louise, Joseph, John, Alys, Ross, Richard, Ann, Therese, and Rita. Alys and Richard still bless us with their presence, along with nieces and nephews.

Ann always felt close to her father, even though he died when she was 7 years old. Her widowed mother, Irene, quietly, but firmly, shouldered the parental role. Irene was raised in the Baptist tradition. She was baptized into the Catholic faith and made her First Communion on the day of her wedding. She inspired her children by her deep, active faith and enduring love of Scripture. Her fidelity had profound and lasting effects. Two sons went to the seminary, Ann and Alys entered the IHM congregation, and all the family experienced a living faith.

Poverty touched their lives. They worked on their grandparents' farm for food. As they grew older, they turned in their modest earnings for family support. Ann babysat to buy her own clothes at age 9. Ann recalls keeping warm during the winter in the only room in the house with a stove, the kitchen. In the cold of winter, the children took warm bricks to their beds at night. The family was rich in love and mutual care. Their goal at Christmastime was to have saved a dollar in order to buy a 10-cent gift for each one.

St. Philip Parish in Battle Creek strengthened their Catholicity and introduced them to the IHM Sisters. On June 21, 1946, shortly after graduation, Ann joined her sister Alys in Monroe to become an IHM Sister. Formation time passed quickly with reception in 1947 and final profession in 1952. In 1949, Ann, bearing the religious name Agnes, Cecile, began a teaching ministry that led to pastoral ministry. Her learning to live and thrive with limited income during childhood served Ann well in understanding the poor in her ministry to the needy, both in teaching and then in her years of pastoral care.

Her first six years of ministry were at St. Rose School in Detroit. There, she claimed that her second-graders schooled her in the art and profession of teaching. Quickly, she learned to engage the family as well as the child in learning. Her skills developed in successive missions to the Hall of the Divine Child on our campus and at St. Mary School in Marshall, Mich.

She soon established a goal: "They did not leave me until they could read and write."

A move to Holy Trinity School in Corktown for 11 years and to Holy Redeemer Parish for a year put Ann in a mentoring relationship with two dedicated and inspiring leaders serving the poor: Sister Maura Morrissey, IHM, and Monsignor Clement Kern. They set a pace she admired and readily adopted as her own.

During her year at Holy Redeemer, Father Clem Kern invited her back to Holy Trinity. Thus, Ann entered into a 33-year tenure at Holy Trinity Parish. She became a pastoral minister. It was there that she grew into what was probably her most meaningful years of ministry.

Holy Trinity Catholic Parish began as Cabrini Center in 1833. Their first pastor, Father Martin Kundig, served hundreds of struggling immigrants and their families. Through Father Kundig, a former Swiss papal guard, the parish became known as Holy Trinity Catholic Parish for the Poor. Successive pastors, including Father Clement Kern, followed by Fathers Jay Samonie, Tom Sutherland, John Nowland and Russ Kohler, recognized the multiple needs and maintained a singular outreach through the decades. IHMs were privileged to join them there in ministry.

Where did Ann find people in need? On the steps of the rectory, in the back pews of the church, walking the Corktown streets, at the Porter Street Apartments, in abandoned buildings, in prison, in funeral homes and cemeteries, in the church hall where she and parishioners prepared as many as 600 food baskets for families at Christmas time and in the Kundig Center where she was director for several years.

Who came seeking help? The sick and the shut-in, destitute families, people seeking lost relatives, forgotten urban dwellers. There were diverse individuals: a man without work, a woman homeless and pregnant, an ex-con, an ex-nun in a senior-living home, veterans, Kosovar refugees, along with seafarers met through her membership in the Apostleship of the Sea. Her scrapbooks bulge with pictures, letters, stories of the young, the aged, the dying and the mentally challenged. "She found her home at Most Holy Trinity in Corktown ..." wrote one of her admirers.

Times and conditions change, however. In 2005, Ann retired to the Motherhouse, though some of her homeless friends had assured her of housing and protection in Corktown. At the Motherhouse, she found much to do. She kept her zest for ubiquitous and big projects. All through the years, her sister, Alys, was a steady ally. In her decades on mission, Ann was grateful for Alys' interventions for those in need. Now, at home together, we found them restoring St. Joseph Island and beautifying Lilac Court with generous helpers.

Inspired by her devotion to St. Joseph and grateful for St. Joseph's Lake holding 1,400,000 gallons of water, Ann wrote of St. Joseph's response to the community's prayer, "This lake affects 'the sprinkling systems and the refrigeration system as well,'" and is 'the most valuable single donation the Community has ever received'" (St. Joseph and His Lake, St. Mary College and Academy). With support from Leadership, Ann provided a prayer now offered to St. Joseph on Wednesdays in the Chapel.

Regarding the renovation and conversion of Lilac Court into Our Lady's Courtyard, Ann wrote of that project also. She described the acquisition of a fountain with running water and lighting. She expressed gratitude for the help provided by the maintenance people and the support of the sisters. For some years, she led in planting 3,000 tulips a year and daffodils as well. With delight, she shared pictures of the varieties of species of lilies. She listed the species in detail, "passionate, sunrise, sunset and hush-a-byes, Asiatic, Hotchkiss and daylilies."

She did not come home alone. Ann worked to move some of the neediest people from Trinity closer and attended to their funeral and burial when their time came. As time passed, Ann received recognition. Groups and organizations honored her work. Among them were the Business and Professional Women, USA (10/22/85), Trinity Continuing Care Services (5/22/01) and the National Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (July 2014), all recognizing her humanitarian contributions.

Appreciation came from Church leaders like Adam Cardinal Maida, Bishops Kenneth Untener and Thomas Gumbleton. Bishop Gumbleton wrote, "Your presence in Southwest Detroit has been constant. You have been for literally thousands of people the caring and compassionate presence of Christ." (Letter,

4/30/2001) Civic leaders, too, such as Mayors Coleman A. Young and Dennis Archer, expressed appreciation in the name of the city.

She used these honors to garner support for those in need. Each Christmas for some years now, Ann was able to provide generous care packages for more than 100 veterans as well as some residents in elder housing. Their letters of gratitude are many. Still, they are a small expression of the hundreds, yes, the thousands, who have come to recognize what Ann has done that they might "have a blessed day."

Featured in an article in the *Monroe News*, Ann summed up her attainments, "Everything I've done is because of other people and I belong to a community that has supported me." (Monroe News Aug. 26, 2014)

Jesus said, "I tell you: do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink or about your body, what you will wear. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these . . . strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6: 25,28, 33)

Surely, Ann, there must be for you in heaven abundant lilies, a profusion of blossoms. There, you and the many whose lives you touched can gather. You need not toil or spin. Righteousness rules. Beauty abounds. Love embraces all. May you know Heaven to be what is promised: fullness of life and joy for all.

Written and delivered by Joan Glisky, IHM
Feb. 20, 2020