

## Obituary



Sister Anne Durack, IHM, 90, died Thursday, Dec. 27, 2018, at her home, the IHM Motherhouse in Monroe.

Sister Anne was one of four daughters and one son born to Thomas and Mary (Wines) Durack. Born on Aug. 31, 1928, in Detroit, she was baptized Anne, at the Church of St. Cecilia, Detroit. She attended the parish's elementary and high schools, and after graduation in 1946 entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe. She received the religious name of Sister Thomas Marie.

Sister Anne earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College and a master's degree from Wayne State University, Detroit. Her career in education spanned 50-plus years as a teacher and administrator. She taught at St. Mary and St. John, Monroe; Holy Redeemer, Detroit, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Emmett, Mich., and for more than 10 years at St. Mary of Redford, Detroit. She served extensively at St. Monica, Mobile, Ala., as teacher, administrator and principal and was a well-known supporter of the students' sporting activities.

Sister Ann resided in Redford after retiring from teaching and continued as an active volunteer at St. Mary School, St. Christine Parish food kitchen, and wherever the need called her. She retired to the IHM Motherhouse in 2013.

## Remembering

Sister Anne Durack was a woman of deep faith, lover of and loved by a wonderful family, true-blue IHM, educator "par excellence", die-hard Detroit sports fan, hard worker, generous and kind, with a great sense of humor and all the grand qualities of her Irish-Catholic heritage. She never thought more or less of herself, never put herself above anyone. She felt blest by the gifts God had given her and used them in service to others until these last years when weariness and increasing diminishment brought her to this statement of her ministerial goal, "I live each day one at a time and do the best I can."

Born on Aug. 31, 1928, to Mary and Thomas Durack, Anne was their fourth daughter. She would be followed some 10 years later by her only brother, Thomas. Sister Anne spoke of the many blessings of family and how she

appreciated the love and care given by her dear parents to herself and her siblings: Mary Margaret who became an IHM; Julia, a Maryknoll Sister who passed away while ministering in South Korea; sister Brigid Eileen and husband John Muldowney, who raised her beautiful family; and finally, brother Tom and wife, Anne, who did the same.

Mrs. Durack was a homemaker and Mr. Durack, a captain in the Detroit Fire Department. Growing up, Anne attended St. Cecilia School in Detroit for 12 years. In eighth grade, Anne prayed to our Blessed Mother, to ask what she should do with her life. Anne's mother was happy when Anne told her she wanted to join the convent, but her dad said, "I thought you had better sense." Later, of course, he was pleased with her decision. Anne entered the convent on July 2, 1946, was received Jan. 2, 1947 and given the name, Sister Thomas Marie. Her final profession was Jan. 2, 1952.

Sister Anne demonstrated the qualities that gave our IHM community a stellar reputation as educators. She taught in elementary schools for 51 years, earning her Master of Science from Wayne State University along the way. From her first assignment in 1949 at Holy Redeemer in Detroit to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Emmett, St. Michael, Flint, St. Mary and St. John in Monroe, to 24 years as principal and teacher at St. Monica in Mobile, Ala., back to Michigan to St. Gemma and finally 13 years teaching fourth grade at St. Mary of Redford, Detroit, Sister Anne's enthusiasm and love of children and teaching never waned. She LOVED teaching.

Every day, at St. Mary of Redford, when we were opening the building at 6 a.m. to receive the early room children, I would meet Sister Anne entering the school. She would say she could hardly wait for the school day to begin and that she just loved teaching, loved the children, loved preparing to teach, even loved checking papers! Her students mirrored her enthusiasm and it was always such a pleasure to visit her classroom. She used her lovely singing voice; competitions based on her great devotion to sports teams; her incredible sense of preparation, organization and order; a stern but fair and loving manner; and always that contagious enthusiasm for teaching and learning. Her classroom was home to the most orderly collection of happy children, a sea of hands raised and waving to be the one to answer the question or make a comment. She said what she meant and she meant what she said. Her students appreciated her clear expectations and consistency. Now about her favorite consequence:

writing times tables, not so much!

When asked about some of her memories as a teacher, Sister Anne recalled one day when her class, returning from a gathering, was lined up in the hall outside her classroom. She noticed one of her fourth grade boys, who were near the end of the line, coming toward her. As he approached, Sister Anne bent down, and he whispered in her ear, "Would you give me a hug?" She was a bit surprised but fulfilled his request and he returned to his place in line. No doubt comforted and happy.

Student Matthew McNeil wrote: "To My Teacher Sr. Anne. Sr. Anne is my teacher. To me she is quite a feature. She is very funny and very stern. But with Sr. Anne as my teacher I have no concern." Many times I heard children say they didn't want to have to go to fifth grade because Sister Anne's room was the most fun and best place to learn.

Sister Anne's love for children found special meaning as she followed the career of a boy, about whom she had heard, who had been writing poems and stories since the age of three. His name was Mattie (Matthew Stepenak). Afflicted with a debilitating condition that had already caused the death of his three siblings, he expressed himself with a simplicity, a wisdom, faith and sense of hope that deeply touched Sister Anne. I think she obtained every book he wrote and heard every interview he gave about what he called his "Heartsong."

Sister Anne was always athletic. She especially enjoyed square dancing and playing baseball. She passed these on to her students, joining them in games on the playground during recess. One day after supper, the doorbell rang. There stood some youngsters, bat and mitts in hand. Their question, "Mother Superior, can Sister Anne come out and play?"

As principal in Alabama, Sister Anne's competitive spirit was a driving force as she urged her students on to win championships in the yearly diocesan-wide competitions.

Sister Anne thought she was one of the luckiest, most graced people on Earth because of her family. She loved every member with all her heart and her family gave their hearts to her. From various events to many trips to every kind of celebration or concern, she basked in the glow of this loving family. She was so

pleased and so proud, so concerned, so inclusive of each member in her prayers.

For many years, Sisters Anne and Mary Margaret lived together. They were very devoted to each other and spent their later years volunteering, especially at St. Mary and at St. Christine soup kitchen, as well as hosting friends for dinner. Sister Anne continued her loving care for Sister Mary Margaret when they retired to the Motherhouse, grateful for the assistance and attention of sisters and staff, especially in health care.

Sister Anne never regretted that decision she made so many years ago to become an IHM. Her life was enriched beyond measure here by friendships and classmates, opportunities for prayer and learning, a deepening understanding of IHM Gospel values, a sense of community, the support and love she found here with so many others whose lives centered on finding God everywhere and trying to comprehend His unfathomable love for her.

And now dear Sister, the strife is 'ore, the battle done, the victory won! Lift high the trophy and bow your head to receive the garland crown! No need for motorized cart or walker, no pain or weariness; your voice is back, and your smile, that beautiful smile. We can only imagine your joy when you opened your eyes to eternal life, and saw at last, our loving God, face to face.

Written and delivered by Loretta Schroeder, IHM, Dec. 31, 2018