

Obituary



Sister Mary Jane Hinks, IHM, 92, died Tuesday, Sept. 4 at IHM Senior Living Community, Monroe.

Sister Mary Jane was one of five children, one boy and four girls, of Stacy and Marguerite (Moloney) Hinks. She was born on Nov. 15, 1925 in Detroit and given the name Mary Jane. Sister Mary Jane attended Sacred Heart Elementary and High Schools in Dearborn, Mich. She became a member of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe in 1944 and received the religious name Sister Marie Mark.

Sister Mary Jane earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College, Detroit. She taught in formal education for 56 years at Our Lady of Lourdes, River Rouge, Mich.; Sacred Heart, Roseville, Mich.; St. Vincent, Pontiac, Mich.; Gesu, Detroit; St. John, Monroe; St. Joseph, Trenton, Mich., and St. Michael, Miami. Along with teaching elementary school, Sister Mary Jane enjoyed instructing children in choral in grades one through five and also taught in the religious education programs.

In 1974, Sister Mary Jane returned to Florida and taught at St. Lawrence School in North Miami Beach for nine years. She enjoyed two years of renewal in Minnesota at the Derham Community in St. Paul, after which she returned to Florida, teaching at St. Coleman School in Pompano Beach for the next 18 years. In 2003, she retired to the IHM Motherhouse in Monroe, volunteering in service areas and visiting the sick as she was able.

Remembering

On Nov. 15, 1925, Stacey B. and Marguerite (Moloney) Hinks became the proud parents of twin girls, Shirley and Mary Jane, born in Detroit. The twins were the last of their five children. Bob, Betty and Virginia had arrived before Mary Jane and Shirley.

Mary Jane recalled some of her favorite childhood experiences. The greatest she mentioned was going camping twice each summer in Lorels, Mich., where she loved swimming, fishing and stargazing along the Au Sable River. The twins also relished putting on plays in Sacred Heart Convent, often on Saturday mornings.

As she matured, she felt a special sense of call to enter the IHM community, like her twin sister Shirley. Mary Jane was asked to wait one year after Shirley entered. On July 1, 1944, Mary Jane entered and was received into the Novitiate on Jan. 2, 1945. She made her final vows as Sister Marie Mark on Jan. 2, 1950.

Her first mission was Our Lady of Lourdes, where she was sent by Mother Teresa to replace a sister who had become ill. Mary Jane had no preparation for teaching, but soon discovered her passion for teaching first and second grades. She loved children and soon became a first-class educator. In addition to the regular curricula, she prepared students for the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist. Her love of music spilled into creating plays, shows and taking them to senior citizens' residences and hospitals at Christmastime. Underlying her zeal was a deep spiritual person.

With Jesus, Mary Jane heard the cry of all God's people ... with the power of God's Spirit, she responded to their cry; in a special way, she was committed to the work of education, a ministry in which our community has been engaged for more than a century (*IHM Constitutions Chapter 2: Article 10, 11*).

Today, we honor one among us who has spent her entire religious life in the ministry of Catholic education. Twenty-two of those years were spent within the Archdiocese of Detroit in the city and River Rouge, Roseville, Pontiac, Trenton and Monroe. With the exception of two years of renewal and sabbatical, Mary Jane ministered for 32 years in Florida, recalling fruitful years at St. Lawrence, North Miami Beach and St. Coleman, Pompano Beach. As a creative primary teacher, Mary Jane used "the many unique gifts God has given her" in the service of God's people.

As one pastor, Father Foudy, wrote: "Thank you for all the years of service that you gave to the Church educating its children ... I always remember how well you prepared the children for their First Communion. You have been a great example."

Parents were quick to acknowledge the outstanding qualities she exhibited with their children: "Spiritual, Integrity, Sincere, Thoughtful, Educator, Refreshing, Magnificent, Admirable, Resourceful, Youthful, Jovial Articulate, Nurturing and Enthusiastic ..." Put them all together and they spell Sister Mary Jane: "a lady with unending class!"

One woman said, "My older son, Anthony, has been in Sister Mary Jane's class ... I am very impressed with her willingness to assist her students with their education and their 'attitudes.' She has a firm but fair policy in her classroom that I respect. Her classroom demeanor has assisted my sensitive and strong-willed son, and his excellent report card grades are a credit to her and him. Also having Sister for his first Holy Communion year makes this year for him doubly special. ... I do hope one day my younger son, Andrew, will be in her classroom...."

But the essential assessment comes from the students themselves: "You have always taught me to strive for the next level of excellence. ..." "You have always been there for me ..., your teachings will never stop. ... I love you with all my heart and hope I have half the heart you do when I grow older." "... Your caring helped me overcome my fears, your knowledge helped me develop my mind, and your courage helped encourage me to always do my best. Your thoughtfulness and kindness over these years will never be forgotten because you have touched the hearts and souls of so many people, especially mine." "... Thinking about it now I could not have asked for a better teacher. You instilled in me a sense of discipline, character, morals, and values that I carry to this day, and I thank you for it. You taught us in a way that made us want to learn and achieve our goals. ... My only concern in your retirement is the children that will have missed out on YOU. ..."

"... Teaching is more than just standing up in front of students and reading from a book. It is molding the individual into a person capable of being productive in society and able to make a contribution to this world. Sister did this and much more. Because of her I have had a very productive educational and professional career. She has set the tone for what would be, God willing, a long, productive, successful life. I can only pray that one day my children will have a teacher in their lives like Sister Mary Jane. ..."

"I remember you so well because you were such an excellent teacher ... I remember how strict you were in regard to punctuation and spelling and grammar. This has helped many times over. ... I remember how funny you were and how you laughed. ... I would like you to know that my sister and I are both teachers. ... Thank you for teaching me, and also for instilling in me a desire to emulate your excellence in teaching.

Of course, Mary Jane, your students did recall some of the lighthearted times. They laughingly recall singing the songs of Johnny Matthis, "Our Father" (over and over again); "Jelly on My Belly," "Like It Fine," "I've Got Five Pockets On My Overalls," "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" and "A Pinch to Grow an Inch, A Sock To Grow A Block." As one of the parents stated, "You have traveled far on life's journey and touched us in many ways. . . . you've made a difference in our lives."

And Mary Jane, you continued to make a difference in lives of those who lived and worked with you, especially in your retirement.

There you were greeting everyone with your famous smile and even a bit of laughter sparked by your endless stories. Your first years here saw you as Eucharistic minister, singing in the choir and assisting in the library as well as being a driver. Although physical limitations dictated changes, you still ministered as you could when you could. We saw you conscientiously distributing mail to our sisters in memory care even taking time to sew name tapes on their clothes as needed. Each week, someone in health care looked forward to your coming to help her in making out her weekly menu. The list goes on with unexpected tasks so generously performed. Thank you, Mary Jane, for faithfully ministering in God's vineyard these many years. As individuals and as community we are affirmed by your generosity, your loving care and smiling presence.

Thank you and God bless you!

Written by Josephine Sferrella, IHM, (deceased) and Judith Bonini, IHM
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