

## Obituary



Sister Mary Ellen Keyes, IHM, 91, died unexpectedly following a brief illness on Monday, July 9, at St. Joseph Mercy Oakland Hospital, Pontiac.

She was born May 27, 1927, in Detroit to Leo and Kathleen (Flanagan) Keyes, one of four children. After attending elementary and high school at St. Mary of Redford, Detroit, she entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary congregation on July 2, 1945, receiving the religious name John

Elizabeth.

Sister Mary Ellen earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College, followed by a master's degree from University of Detroit, a doctorate from Wayne State University and Master of Divinity degree from Ss. Cyril and Methodius Seminary, Orchard Lake. She later studied in Rome.

She ministered in Michigan as an elementary and high school teacher at St. Mary, Mt. Morris; Holy Redeemer, Gesu, St. John Vianney and Marygrove College, Detroit; Bishop Gallagher High School, Harper Woods; and St. Mary Academy, Monroe. At Visitation House of Prayer, Monroe and in the IHM provinces, she participated in contemplative prayer, ongoing formation for spiritual and retreat direction.

In 1975, she was missioned to St. Hugo of the Hills Parish and School in Bloomfield Hills. She spent the next 38 years in active ministry, living there until her recent illness. Her ministries at St. Hugo included, teaching, assistant principal, retreat director, spiritual director, consulting, pastoral work, formation and prayer.

## Remembering

Mary Ellen was born May 27, 1927 in Detroit to Leo Joseph and Katherine (Flanagan) Keyes. The oldest of their four children, she was joined by brothers, John and Joseph, and sister Elizabeth. After attending elementary and high school at St. Mary of Redford, Detroit, she entered the congregation on July 2, 1945 and received the religious name John Elizabeth.

Mary Ellen continued formal education at Marygrove College, earning her bachelor's degree followed by a master's degree at the University of Detroit, and a doctorate from Wayne State University. She also earned a master's degree in Divinity from St. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Mich. Mary Ellen loved to study and go to school.

Often times Mary Ellen was my ghost writer; she was very talented in writing. So, I'm using something she wrote for her 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee:

"I was prayed into religious life along with 99 other women. 1945 was the jubilee of the IHM community, which had been founded in November 1845. I was told later that the Monroe Sisters had prayed that 100 vocations would materialize during their 100<sup>th</sup> year. What a glorious answer to their supplication!

My formative years were beautiful, and prepared me for mission. My vision of Monroe included teaching and all that being a sister entailed. I was anxious to begin.

After my profession of first vows in 1948, I was assigned to St. Mary, Mt. Morris, to teach sixth graders. I loved it! My community life was a time of learning and incorporating prayer and living with six devoted women who taught me so much. What a wonderful choice God made regarding my first mission.

I have been on several missions in Michigan: Gesu, St. Mary Academy, Bishop Gallagher, St. John Vianney, Marygrove and St. Hugo of the Hills, to name a few, wherein I performed the different roles of supervising teachers, being directress, establishing a new convent and/or school and writing my dissertation. All my missions were also graced places, living with graced people. My present mission, St. Hugo of the Hills, has enabled me to use my gifts for teaching, administration and community with talented and spiritual women for the longest number of years, for which I rejoice.

To enrich my social studies and history background, I obtained a grant to attend Texas Southern University and was also privileged to study in Mexico on a Fulbright scholarship grant. An interesting law in Mexico prohibited me from wearing my religious habit. It hung in my closet all the while I was there. For these supplementary offerings I am grateful and I say, "Thank You!"

My vision of being a religious sister entailed the spiritual dimension. In formation, the primary focus was leading a religious life. At the same time, I was being schooled as a teacher and experienced religious life on mission. Daily prayer and Eucharist accompanied living in community and balanced the call to religious life.

Many spiritual and extraordinary helps have graced my life. I was a core member of Visitation House of Prayer. I made a 30-day retreat with George Aschenbrenner, SJ; I was gifted with a year of study in the ARC Program in Rome, with its studies, renowned lectures and travels to the Holy Land and Greece; I was a student in a clinical pastoral program focusing on spiritual direction. That same year I earned a Master of Divinity degree.

God's greatest gift was and is being chosen, so surprisingly, again and again.

Being Chosen  
My birthing in May,  
Being born in St. Mary's Hospital,  
In my naming,  
My parish – St. Mary of Redford,  
St. Mary School and  
IHM teachers, Monroe, my destiny!  
Chosen to be here, there.  
Chosen to do this and that.  
Chosen to travel hither and yon.  
Chosen then and now, again and again  
by God."

And now, Mary Ellen, you have received the greatest gift of all – eternal life. We commend you into the loving arms of the God you have served so lovingly, faithfully and joyfully for so many years.

Eternal rest grant unto you and let perpetual light shine upon you.  
May your soul and all the souls of the faithful departed – rest in peace. Amen.

Written and delivered by Margaret Van Velzen, IHM, July 13, 2018