

Remembering Doreen Lynch, IHM
March 14, 1934 – May 3, 2021



Doreen was very faithful in submitting articles and writing chronicles of her life and ministry. Much of the content of this remembering is taken from her page in the *IHM Book of Life*, her 60th Jubilee class booklet and from our IHM Archives.

How very appropriate it is, that the transition journey to eternal life of Doreen Magdalen Lynch has been taking place at this Easter time. Doreen's contagious enthusiasm for LIFE mirrors that of Mary Magdalen. With her, we say, ALLELUIA!

In a recorded interview for her 60th Jubilee in 2015, Doreen states that she grew up with loving parents and that her father, Theodore Albert Lynch, had a good sense of humor. He was of Irish and French descent and was born in Bay City, Mich. Her mother, Frances Mercedes Essenmacher, was of German descent and was born in Dearborn. Doreen's grandmother came to America as a young child. Theodore and Frances were married at St. Alphonsus Church in Dearborn. Doreen was baptized at Sacred Heart in Dearborn.

Doreen had two sisters: Mary Doreen who died at birth, and Mary Lucille, known as Mary Lu, O'Connor, who died in December 2020. Both Mary Lu and Doreen attended St. Francis de Sales, where they were taught by IHMs for 12 years.

Doreen earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College, a Master of Arts degree in home economics education (with undergraduate majors in history, science and theology) from Michigan State University. She also did graduate study in religious education at the Pius XII Institute in Detroit; the University of Detroit; and at St. Joseph, Cincinnati.

It was in her second year while at Marygrove, that Doreen speaks of her call, "the Lord came into my life in a very special way," and that it was through her uncle, a priest, her aunt, a sister, and the example of her parents, that she had "always known the Lord."

In her "Book of Life" page, dated Pentecost 1998, Doreen narrates that as an infant, she was dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the occasion being her uncle's first Mass. Exactly 21 years later, on May 31, 1955, the Feast of the Queenship of Mary, Doreen began her journey as an IHM Sister, (e.g., a novice) and was given the name John Magdalen. After a two-year novitiate, Doreen was first professed on June 17, 1957, and final profession on June 17, 1960.

Doreen served in three states, Michigan, Minnesota and Florida. It is evident that while she was involved in a number of ministries, she was a born teacher with a contagious enthusiasm for the person, the ministry, the place, wherever she currently was.

Her first years of formal teaching ministry took place in her home state of Michigan, with her first mission being St. Mary of Redford, where she taught third grade in the very same classroom her mother taught. Doreen loved to add dramatizations in her classrooms as it was a very effective way for her students to understand the teachings of Jesus. The next six years of teaching in Michigan included religion and home economics (food and clothing), which was her major graduate degree. I am amazed at Doreen's ability to teach this subject in the age range from lower elementary through high school levels for the same semester!

Doreen tells us of a life-changing experience while teaching at Star of the Sea High School. A senior boy had been killed and when walking into the funeral home, she saw a room full of grieving students; some were her own. She realized then how fragile life is. She writes "As I knelt to pray, I heard that still, small voice gently shout a question: 'WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO COMMIT YOUR LIFE TO YOUNG PEOPLE?'" She continues, "My fiat led to a new dedication with blessings and joyful memories that I will treasure forever." Following 10 years of formal classroom teaching, she became a parish religious education/youth coordinator. This ended her 14 years of ministry in Michigan.

1972 began with nine years of new ministries for Doreen in Minnesota in the Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St Paul. The archbishop, John Roach, was one of the nation's bishops who whole-heartedly embraced the vision of Vatican II and encouraged its implementation. This was an exceedingly fruitful and exciting time for Doreen where her many gifts were encouraged, sometimes challenged. Regular parish team meetings seemed to be the norm in the three parishes where she served. The scope of her ministry was vast, encompassing all ages from infants to adults to the aged in nursing homes. As a religious education coordinator, she was greatly involved with families in sacramental preparation. She tells of the time when she helped deliver a baby of one of her parishioners. The baby is Doreen's Godchild who, in the past, has brought his children to visit.

In Minnesota, Doreen was attracted to the Charismatic Prayer Movement, both Catholic and Ecumenical. She became a member of the Franciscan Retreat Center in Prior Lake. For her, it became a home away from home. Through Doreen's influence many young men and women in their teens and young adulthood joined the movement, and themselves became leaders. She writes that "they became a constant joy to her."

For most of her time in Minneapolis, Doreen lived alone in an apartment complex. However, she writes, "The living situation provided unique experiences for sharing prayer, building community and witnessing to our IHM commitment to Christ and the Church. Often, Doreen joined the other IHM communities for feast day meals, picnics and regional meetings.

After completing nine years of ministry, Doreen left the cold of Minnesota for warmer weather in Florida. While in the archdiocese of Miami, she served as a campus minister, which led to high school campus ministry and the teaching of liturgy and Scripture. Later she taught lay

people to be religious education teachers on military bases. As in Minnesota, Doreen's greatest joy was working with youth evangelization teams and encouraging their leadership. She writes of her darkest hour, enduring Hurricane Andrew in August 1992. The storm hit 30 parishes where she had worked. Hope was restored when many young people joined in the community effort to rebuild. A year after Hurricane Andrew, Doreen moved to Gainesville, serving among young people in confirmation programs, youth rallies, the University of Florida Neumann Center and others, too numerous to name. In 2011 she retired and became a volunteer in pet ministry.

True to her nature, in retirement years Doreen welcomed, reached out to neighbors – to those who came into her life. Through phone conversations during these past few weeks I have become acquainted with two very significant people in Doreen's life, Zeb – a next door neighbor – and Carrie, a nurse. Via email, Zeb writes,

"On Easter of 2012 I was living across from a young lady in her 70s, and on this day [she] invited me in to chat. We talked about our lives, we spoke about the Lord, and I learned that she was a nun. Sister Doreen and I became family that day. In the mornings I would try to sneak out and run to my truck, but she would catch me, and we would chat until I was late for work. From that day on I would regularly check on Sister Doreen. She quickly became like a grandmother to me and I would invite my friends and family over to meet her, because she was truly a blessing to me and many others.

Later in his message, Zeb gave an account of Doreen failing to answer the door because of a fall, her recovery and he and Carrie, a nurse, bringing her to Monroe in 2016. Both Zeb and Carrie have been in regular contact as faithful friends and have come to visit.

And so, Doreen has come full circle back to Michigan, back to Monroe where it all began. The medical staff, nurses and doctors who have served her on 3-G for six years, when asked, spoke of Doreen's contagious enthusiasm, her feistiness but always her gratitude, and also that she loved both giving and receiving cards.

On her 60th Jubilee, Doreen tells us that her greatest joy since joining the community has been her relationship with God. "My life has been in God's hands every single day." She continues that each day she writes down 10 things for which she is grateful: her many friendships, the places she has been and the life the community has provided are always on the list.

Doreen's middle baptismal name was Magdalen, and a Magdalen she was! The confirmation name she chose was Martha, and a Martha she was! In many ways, Doreen's life mirrored these women who spent their lives in loving and serving the Lord. I am quite sure, that these two saintly women were among the first in line to greet Doreen as she entered new life.

Written and delivered by Genevieve Petrak, IHM
May 6, 2021