

Remembering Joyce Campbell, IHM Sept. 19, 1930 – Feb. 8, 2022

Joyce was with us for over 50 years. She shared wholeheartedly from the beginning in the IHM mission and she loved being an IHM. Joy was always engaged in the happenings of the moment and also allowed for times of deep reflection. This gave her life a profound beauty and made it a gift for many - as I learned walking with her for thirty years, but especially the last ten.

On her “IHM Book of Life” page, Joy reflected on Jeremiah 18 in how she had been shaped and reshaped as potter’s clay by God and by life down the years. In her 91st year, Joy received her final shaping as beautiful pottery.

Joycelyn Rose Campbell or Joyce, known by friends as Joy, was just that, a joy for the IHM community, for her family and her many friends. Of southern roots, Joy was born on Sept. 19, 1930, in Arkansas and then lived in Texas until she was nine years old. Her mother was born in Louisiana and her father in Tennessee. Joy was an only child and her parents separated when she was very young. Joy and her mother eventually moved to Flint. These were hard times, not easy for either of them. Joy’s mother had been a student at a Catholic boarding school once and wanted the same experience for her daughter. Somehow, with the advice of a priest, her mother contacted the IHM Sisters at St. Mary Academy, and Joy became a student there.

“The experience of going to the Academy shaped my life” Joy often said. It was a place where she felt safe, cared for and loved. Joy flourished and she even thought of religious life during high school, but then she went on to attend Marygrove College. Her college education was encouraged and supported by Sister Thomas Aquinas and Sister Claudia Carlen, for whom she worked in the Marygrove Library. Joy labored there during those four years to pay for college and graduated in 1952.

Making friends easily with other Marygrove students, Joy was caught up in some hilarious exploits in those days. She could tell some great stories of those adventures. She was an extravert and loved having people around. Joy remained close to several high school and college friends over the rest of her life.

As a young woman, Joy was full of high spirits and really enjoyed having a good time. She had a sense of style and flair given to her by her mother and her Aunt Earline, who found vanity was a virtue. Her hair was always neatly styled and the earrings had to always match the outfit. Joy, always pleasant in appearance, looked her best as a way of honoring people with whom she interacted.

Joy was strong in her Catholic beliefs, and she also had a deepening spirituality. Her desire was to make the world more just and a better place for all. She made retreats, read, discussed and had a spiritual director even in her early adult years. This was preparation for what lay ahead.



As a parochial school teacher, Joy grew to love her students and the art of teaching. She was committed to Catholic education. At the same time, Joyce was looking for a lifelong mate. She dated a lot, had several significant relationships and was engaged to be married once. A call to religious life emerged and held her interest as well. God was continually molding her.

Following the call in her twenties led Joy to explore IHM pre-Vatican II religious life as a postulant, but only for three months. Sometime later, she entered a novitiate in Quebec, Canada for about a year. These were shaping experiences, but both times Joy found religious life too remote from the world to be appealing.

However, in the 1960s with Vatican II and the renewal of religious communities, Joy reconnected with IHMs at St. Bede School, Southfield. The call to consecrated life slowly re-emerged. Joy found conversations with Sr. Anne Wisda, a teaching colleague and others enlightening. With Vatican II's call for religious life's renewal, the world was seen as a source of revelation and religious life grew more relevant for Joy. So, in December 1967, she said yes once more to God's relentless call and re-entered the IHM community. Joy made her final profession in 1977.

The Potter's reshaping continued in her becoming an IHM. Joy's first mission after first vows was as a teacher at Bishop Gallagher High School, Harper Woods. She was later asked to work in the Archdiocesan campus ministry at Macomb County Community College (MCCC) where she served for more than 33 years. She said, "Although there were challenges, campus ministry fit me to a "T," and I felt a strong call to it."

Jan Soleau, IHM, Joy's dear friend and soulmate, was also entering into campus ministry at Wayne State University and she was a great source of encouragement. Initially, as a campus minister, Joy enjoyed participating in the liturgies, student clubs and retreats. She became known as very able to help with great problems and to comfort grieving students and staff.

Later, Joy was more involved with college administration and staff, plus with ministers of various faith traditions. Joy found that she could get more done once her administrative relationships were firmly developed. She also became pastor to many at all levels of the College. The calls and notes Joy received from MCCC administrators, staff and former students upon hearing of her final illness attest to her impact on them. Where others hesitated to address social issues, Joy would gently encourage action and good things happened, understanding and knowledge were deepened. Former Macomb County College administrator Jim Varty said, "You went to Joyce if something needed to get done."

Developing social justice programming for Macomb Community College (MCC), such as the Marygrove College Dance Company's annual performance during Black History Month (February) illustrates Joy's IHM sense of mission and her educational versatility. Over 20 years, she would invite Macomb County grade, middle, high school and college students to these programs, which were splendid. Joy would also invite a prominent media or newspaper personality to speak as part of the event to stimulate career planning. As the chair of the MCC African American History and Culture Committee, Joy felt this type of programming provided a great opportunity for exposure to different cultures and appreciation of the arts. "By providing the opportunity for people to learn about the

incredible diversity that makes up America, we are helping to create a culture of peace and right relationship. That's what IHMs are all about."

Joy's work at MCC was nurtured by her membership on the HIV/AIDS Committee and the Healing Racism Committee of which she was a very active member from its beginning. Joy was passionate about IHM addressing our internalized racism. She spoke to it at our last Chapter, seeking some clear, corporate action.

While celebrating her golden IHM Jubilee, Joy summed up her call to religious life this way, "I was always looking for an opportunity to be with others who shared the same desires and to find a way to experience a deeper spirituality." Many IHMs and other colleagues contributed to her growth and development. Joy returned the favor and encouraged others to keep growing. She truly was a lifelong learner.

Hospitality was a gift that she and Jan offered with gatherings in their home of diverse groups of people. Joy continued that tradition while living alone. Often new friendships were formed among people attending the socials.

Joy, a devotee of Celtic and cosmic spirituality, also had a life-long devotion to Blessed Solanus Casey and would say his simple prayer each day during her daily reflection time:

*O God, I adore You. I give myself to You.
May I be the person You want me to be,
and may Your will be done in my life today.*

Then Joy would give herself over to the work of the day, but only after she concluded by praying for many people by name. At night, she would pray over the day and journal until her eyesight failed her.

These past eleven years were life-shaping, with Jan Soleau's death and Joy's own numerous health challenges, but she was determined to maintain some independence. Her many friends including the Eastside IHMs and Associates, a Sister of St. Joseph, and an Adrian Dominican, celebrated good times with her, but they also helped sustain Joy through some very difficult ones.

As the end of life drew near, Joy found difficulty praying. Sister Breta Gorman, her spiritual director, advised her to simply say "Dear God, I give it all to you." Joy used that prayer several times each day in the end.

Not always an easy patient, Joy was patiently cared for at IHM Healthcare by the staff. Thanks to the staff who cared for her and tried so hard to meet her needs in many simple, creative and generous ways.

Thanks to all IHMs, volunteers and especially the IHM Sisters on 3-G, F and E, who showed love and great care. Joy was blessed by those who were present in her final moments and completion on February 8. Now, Joy is with her Potter.

Today we say with tears in our hearts, "Dear God, we give our Joy to you."

Written and delivered by Janet Ryan, IHM
Feb. 14, 2022