

Remembering Marie Markel, IHM
Sept. 15, 1935 – April 10, 2022



On Sept. 15, 1935, Marie Elaine was born to Mary and Lawrence Markel in Marine City, Michigan. Marie was the youngest child in the family, having one sister and six brothers. The family worked together on their dairy farm and she was grateful to her family whom she describes as warm and supportive. Marie attended Holy Cross School in Marine City from the first grade through high school and was taught by the IHM Sisters from Monroe.

After high school graduation, Marie worked as a secretary at Chris-Craft Corporation, a boat manufacturer. Marie felt a strong vocational call. Four years after high school graduation, she joined the IHM Congregation. Shortly after she entered the congregation, her father passed away. She was very grateful to the

community for allowing her to return to her home and spend time with her grieving family. Because Marie was older when she entered the community, it was her experience that some of the community rules and customs were antiquated. She was delighted to welcome all the changes and the renewal that was a result of the Second Vatican Council.

Marie began her teaching ministry at St. Catherine School, Detroit, in the primary grades. Marie then taught at the Hall of the Divine Child, Monroe, where she had more than a few interesting stories to share about her ministry with the primary boys who boarded at the Hall. After six years at the Hall, Marie was missioned to St. Matthew School, Detroit, for two years.

Marie then was missioned to St. Gerard Majella School in Kirkwood, Missouri. It was a place of ministry where her spirituality was profoundly shaped during this time in the Church, by the parishioners, by the IHM Sisters she lived with and by the many opportunities she had for spiritual and human growth. This time in her life enabled her to deepen her trust, love and grow as an IHM Sister.

Marie moved to the John Carroll School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. When asked about her teaching ministry, Marie remarked, "I loved teaching and being with young children."

This began a period of years in pastoral ministry where Marie was stretched, discovering and using many gifts she did not know she had. At St. Thomas Aquinas, Detroit, Marie served as a pastoral minister and as a liturgy coordinator for 13 years. She also served as pastoral associate at St. Regis Parish, Bloomfield Hills, for two years before moving to minister in the Saginaw Diocese.

Marie accepted a position at Holy Family Parish, Saginaw for two years and then continued her ministry in the Diocese of Saginaw at Holy Spirit Parish in Shields, Michigan. It was at Holy Spirit Parish where Marie was fully immersed in pastoral ministry and used her gifts in liturgy, art and environment in the worship space, gardener of the parish flower patch, faith formation, spiritual direction, homiletics and social service outreach.

Every year, the RCIA program under Marie's direction at Holy Spirit Parish was known as the largest RCIA program in the diocese. It was for this program that Marie enjoyed gathering people from the highways and the byways and then engaging them in the faith formation experience. There are hundreds of people who owe their formation in the Catholic Church to the direction of Marie and the RCIA team she recruited.

Betty Leon, a friend of Marie's and her next in rank in the IHM Congregation, shared, "Over the last 20 years, I was astounded by all that Marie took on in the parish. I was concerned about her health and urged her to delegate and reduce some of the tasks assigned to her." Betty's suggestion did not take root in Marie's life until the last few years before her retirement. She loved her ministry as a pastoral associate at Holy Spirit Parish and it was difficult for her to leave this ministry. However, Marie listened to the Spirit in discerning where God was leading her. She trusted the small, still voice, no matter what the cost was to her personally. It was after 17 years at Holy Spirit that Marie's discernment led her to retire from her ministry at Holy Spirit Parish.

Betty shared a conversation she had with Marie in the last week of her life, asking her what "glorious things" God had done for her. Marie pondered this question and responded that it was a great gift in her later years when God gave her back her voice. This was a great gift to Marie because for many years she suffered from a physical condition in which she struggled to talk above a whisper. For someone who enjoyed interacting with others, this was a huge suffering to be unable to do so with ease.

Marie's ministerial life did not come to an end with her retirement from pastoral ministry at Holy Spirit Parish. Marie decided to serve as a hostess at the Reitz-Hertzberg Funeral Home in Saginaw where she greeted guests and conducted vigil services. She enjoyed being of service to people and socializing. She enjoyed writing friends and family and had a goal to write at least one note per week. Another enjoyment was going out to lunch with friends and of course, she treasured getting together with her family—

with her sister Sylvia, her six brothers and their families, including 46 nieces and nephews, not to mention with her many grandnieces and nephews.

Marie's greatest joy was a gift she received for her 50th Jubilee—a trip to Switzerland with her sister Sylvia! Marie also treasured her pilgrimage to the Holy Land where she said, "I felt closer to Jesus as I walked on the land where he walked." Marie could be described as a humble, prayerful woman of faith and as a committed disciple of Jesus, who sought to serve the needs of others with gentleness and compassion and to accompany others in the deepening of their faith. Marie was grateful to the IHM community and said they were always supportive and caring over the years.

The greatest gift Marie received in her ministerial life was being accepted and loved wherever she served. The gift was mutual because as people experienced Marie's acceptance, her compassion and her love for them, they, in turn, responded in appreciation and love for her. In speaking about her life, Marie once remarked, "I am eternally grateful for my life which has been a great gift that I have lived with a grateful heart."

We now thank you, Marie, for your wonderful life. We thank you for touching the lives of so many people and for making a difference in their lives. Indeed, you are a shining star who gave witness with your faithful life of loving service to the people of God.

Written and delivered by Ellen Rinke, IHM
April 13, 2022