

Theresa Koernke, IHM

Born Theresa Flora Koernke on Feb.23, 1943, in Detroit, Mich. Theresa (TK) was baptized, confirmed and participated in Communion on February 26, according to the tradition of the Byzantine Catholic Church. TK, her older sister, Albertina and younger sister, Florence, were blessed to have loving parents: Albert Franz Koernke (Scandinavian) and Flora Silage of Romania.

TK's encounter with IHM began at Our Lady of Good Counsel School in the third grade. There she met Sisters Agnes Loretta, Patricia Hogan, Theresa Milne, Frances Edward, Malachy and Donatus. As much as she loved the Racine Wisconsin Dominicans after she moved to St. Clement High in Centerline, Mich., the humanity, and peaceful presence of the IHMs won her heart.

Prior to his reception into full communion with the Catholic Church, her father was an Enlightenment Evangelical Lutheran who loved to question all things religious. This is the root of TK's interest in the Ecumenical Movement and her eventual appointment by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (USCCB) Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs to the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches. Her mother and grandmother's rich faith and celebration of the Liturgical Year in the Byzantine Tradition implanted the power of the Liturgy in Theresa's moral life.



TK's missions included: Holy Redeemer Grade School, St. Matthew School, St. Rene Goupil School, Our Lady of Lake Huron School, St. Ann School, Marian High School, Visitation House of Prayer, and the University of Notre Dame for doctoral studies, The Athenaeum of Ohio and Mercyhurst College, Erie, PA. She most treasures her twenty-one years on the faculty of the Washington Theological Union in Washington, DC for the precious opportunity in the formation of lay and religious order ministers for the Church.

Her studies at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. were in Historical Systematic Theology with a view to how the conscious and unconscious systems of thought impact liturgical practice and how people interpret it. These studies led to an appointment to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy at the USCCB.

It is difficult to isolate one 'greatest' joy since TK joined the congregation on Sept. 6, 1961, yet here is the top of the list: Hearing Mother Anna Marie knock on the pew twice and say *From the Dawn of the Day*, hearing hundreds of sisters respond *Be Thou Hailed Mary Full of Grace*, or the first time she heard *Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum* (*My soul magnifies the Lord*) on Vocation Day when she knew she could never leave; or maybe simply walking into a room with the sisters and knowing the beauty of her inheritance.



If Feb. 23, 1943 was the day of her birth into her family and Feb. 26, 1943 her birth into the Church, then Sept. 6, 1961 marks the day of her birth in the IHM Congregation. She will never forget the things her eyes have seen, nor let them slip from her heart all the days of her life.