

Remembering Jean Ann Gorman, IHM

Jan. 10, 1922 – Nov. 18, 2022



Jan. 10, 1922 was a special day in the Gorman home as Joseph and Loretta (Kearns) Gorman were blessed with their second child, a daughter who would join her big brother Robert making a family of four. Her position as the family's baby did not last too long as a couple of years later, Charles arrived and Marjorie, Bill and Barbara followed. On Jan. 29, 1922, she was baptized at Blessed Sacrament and given the name Jean Ann.

The Gorman home in Highland Park was filled with deep faith, love and respect for one another and many happy times. Joseph was the breadwinner working as a mechanic at the Dodge Plant in Hamtramck, while Loretta, the homemaker, was busy caring for their six children. In 1925 the family moved to the Dearborn area,

where residential homes were few and far apart. As children they watched the area develop with new homes springing up, streets being paved and sidewalks put down.

It was here that Jean Ann's early education began and as a student at Saint Alphonsus she made her First Communion and Confirmation. The family then moved to Detroit, where she completed her grade and high school education at Saint Francis de Sales. At St. Francis she was introduced to the IHM Sisters.

Religious life was fostered in the family as Jean Ann's aunt on her mother's side was a Saint Joseph Sister who was deeply loved by all. Jean Ann's father had four nephews who were priests. It was no surprise to her parents when Jean Ann said she wanted to enter the convent. No obstacle was ever put in her way, although Mom and Dad found the first break in the family difficult.

Twenty days after graduation she left the security of a happy home to join the community and the beginning of a new and very rich and fulfilling life. In the Postulate, her days were filled with college courses, choir practice, instructions on prayer, learning some of the prayers in Latin, spending the required time in the chapel and studying. Time passed quickly as she prepared for the Novitiate. Reception day dawned and she received the habit and the name Viviana. Early days in the Novitiate brought more time for prayer and laying the foundation for spiritual life, as well as multiple charges assigned to first-year Novices.

Mission life began early for Jean Ann because, as a novice, she was sent to the first grade of Christ the King School to replace Sister Macrina, who was recovering from surgery. Jean Ann remembers being overwhelmed by the tasks: learning the children's names, sending reports to the office, collecting book money, keeping the room in order and the children busy. As a novice on mission, there were also many changes to adjust to in the house: be in the right place at the right time, remember to pass the virtues at 8

o'clock, and always have a point of reading to share. "This is one I never forgot and often used: Patience is a virtue that leaves you when you need it most."

Upon Sister Macrina's return, and instead of returning to the novitiate, Jean Ann was sent to Saint Agnes to teach second grade. It was a challenge to leave 40 first graders in a small to medium-sized grade school and assume the responsibility of 64-second graders in a large grade and high school. When she told Mother Teresa she was so green, Mother smiled and told her always to remember that "It's only the green things that grow."

Other mission assignments include Epiphany and Gesu, Detroit; a pioneer at Saint Alphonsus in San Leandro, California; Saint Joseph, Monroe; as principal at Saint Boldface, Detroit; Saint Joseph, Trenton, and Saint Vincent and Saint Cyprian, Riverview.

Ministry did not end when the school year closed in June for Jean Ann, as she took every opportunity to be enriched and of service to others. One summer, it was working with the very poor in Appalachia; three other summers, she was privileged to be among the IHMs chosen to teach in British Columbia. Other summers found her heading to Saint Norbert's in Wisconsin for updating in theology which not only benefited her but has enriched many Sisters who have shared the tapes she brought back. There were also the countless summers she offered her service as a driver for the Motherhouse.

In 1985 Jean Ann moved into the Motherhouse to continue her ministry of service. Being an excellent shopper, she could be found in any department store making purchases for Sisters in the health care center who were unable to shop for themselves. This ministry was one of love and deep gratitude for all the senior sisters who had contributed to the community and her as an individual. She continued her service until failing eyesight made driving impossible and necessitated handing off this ministry.

Ministry and service have been gifts that Jean Ann shared with others her whole life. She found new ways to continue to be of service by often picking up the newspaper from the back door for her lounge, delivering the Michigan Catholic and other reading materials to the room bound, visiting sisters in the health care center, giving prayerful support to her family and friends and being a faithful companion to all of us.

Jean Ann, you have said many times that you are grateful for all the graces and opportunities you have been given, and we, your community, are grateful for all you have shared with us.

Written by Margaret Babcock, IHM (2010)
Delivered by Anne Mamienski, IHM, Nov. 23, 2022