

Remembering for Margaret McAnoy, IHM
March 19, 1934 – Dec. 14, 2023



Margaret was born into a loving Catholic family. Her mother, Ann Conlon, came from Lennox, England and her father, Thomas, from Edinburg, Scotland. They met and married in Akron, Ohio, then moved to Detroit. During the Depression years, the four children were born. The McAnoy family members were very devoted to each other: Jo, the oldest, was followed by Tom, Jane and Margaret, the youngest, born March 19, 1934. A very important story Margaret recalled was that they lived on a block with 20 homes. Mr. McAnoy and another man worked for the gas company in the neighborhood. They made sure that no one in the neighborhood would be hungry.

The family was part of the very active St. Gregory Parish. Every Saturday, Margaret's father drove the Sisters for groceries. Jo and Margaret took turns riding in the front seat with him. Sisters were always part of Margaret's life, and Margaret said that she had always known she was going to become one. On Aug. 20, 1952, Margaret entered the Congregation and, as a novice, received the name Sister Thomas Edward. Tom entered Sacred Heart Seminary in high school, and sister Jo entered the Congregation when Margaret was in third grade.

Margaret's first ministries in teaching were grade schools in Jackson, Chicago, Detroit and Monroe at St. Michael and as principal of St. John. In 1969, Margaret was missioned to teach at St. Pius X High School in Atlanta. This began 50 years of devotion and service to the people of Atlanta. She became a part of a vibrant IHM community there and had a gift for building community with joy. She was hospitable and a creative chef, often finding any excuse to have a party. Rose Ange Leddy remembers arriving in Atlanta on Aug. 20, 1970, in time for Margaret's "Half-and-Half Party," which marked half her life as an IHM Sister and half her life before the community.

With an invitation to be principal at Lady of Lourdes Elementary School, she left St. Pius in 1974 to serve the inner-city community of Atlanta. Lady of Lourdes was in danger of closing, and Margaret brought new life to the school community.

Margaret attended a Cursillo weekend retreat, which profoundly changed her life. This led to initiating Cursillo into her work with the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Eventually, she directed the program for two years. She especially loved directing the Women's Cursillo, always beginning with a great chorus of "Let the Women Be There!" As spiritual development staff for the Archdiocese, Margaret excelled and was admired for her gifts that enabled people to know their faith in a deeper way.

Around this time, she began a ministry for men with AIDS and being Margaret, engaged and recruited many Cursillo volunteers to be part of the ministry of care and hospitality, coordinating events at Shrine Parish. Fr. John Adamski remembered how Margaret's gracious hospitality created an atmosphere of welcome, elegance, kindness and compassion for all guests and volunteers. At the Homeless Night Shelter, she became an ardent volunteer and a trainer of volunteers and recruited others to be present at the shelter for over a decade. Margaret said, I literally believe I saw Christ in so many of them, how they took care of each other."

The summer of 1981 found Atlanta in deep crisis; violence against many residents in the inner-city areas was worsening and murders were occurring. Archbishop Thomas Donnellan challenged Catholic parishes to be clear witnesses of the Church's presence to those suffering. "Camp Promise" became the answer to meet the challenge and serve Atlanta's children. As a summer camp for nearly 1,000 children in the area's three parishes, Margaret organized the effort, engaging more than 400 volunteers for the success of "Camp Promise." She elevated the volunteers in such a way as to help them realize the depth of their talents to serve the children. Her work served many. In honor of her meaningful efforts, the Archdiocesan publication, "The Georgia Bulletin," named Margaret "Person of the Year" in Atlanta.

Margaret also directed the Archdiocese's first-year permanent diaconate program, emphasizing peace and justice and the men's involvement beyond the parish family. In some of her last positions, she ministered as Vicar for Religious, and as a chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital.

Sister Louise Sommer, a Sister of St. Joseph, lived with Margaret in Georgia for forty-some years in a joyful, hospitable community. Louise remembers Margaret's gift of gathering volunteers to accomplish whatever was needed and how Margaret never sought out credit. Her benefit was the warm relationships and deep, faithful friendships developed throughout her ministries.

In the IHM community, Margaret was a creative and active participant in her Mission Unit and Assembly and Chapter events. Her response to financially support the community was of importance to her. When she was in full-time ministries and without a salary, she requested financial support from others, not only for herself but for sending to the community.

A co-worker, Father Richard Kieran, described Margaret as "one of those quiet servants who works behind the scenes to accomplish so much good for others. She is a very prayerful person and follows the movement of the Spirit into these areas. A lot of us are preaching, Margaret is kind of doing what needs to happen." Former Atlanta Archbishop

Wilton Gregory recognized Margaret's years of faithful ministry in Atlanta at a luncheon honoring her before he was transferred to Washington, D.C.

It was difficult for Margaret to leave the vibrant faith community in Atlanta, but in 2019, she knew it was time to return to Monroe. At the Motherhouse, she enjoyed community life and many friendships and hoped to minister to the residents and staff of the IHM Senior Living Community. She was always grateful to the community for caring for her married sister Jane as she convalesced at the Motherhouse near the end of her life.

When asked what she was most grateful for in her IHM life, she responded:

I am most grateful that we moved with the times and saw what was happening in the church and the world. I love that we are involved in justice issues and out there where we need to be. There are not many of us, but we still have a lot and we can pray.

Reflecting on her life, she said, "... being an IHM has been the most fulfilling life I can imagine. I have lived on the words, 'Come Follow Me' and have been willing to be a disciple."

Margaret, you have been such a gift to your family, our IHM community, the Church and our world in such need of the love, faith, and community you have lived. May you rest in peace.

***Written and delivered by Kathleen O'Brien, IHM
Dec. 20, 2023***