

## **Remembering Sister Mary Ellen Ginty** 11-26-02

**Mary Ellen Therese Ginty was the 3<sup>rd</sup> child born to John and Beatrice (Tolan) Ginty. Both of her parents were from Ireland and Mary Ellen was proud of her Irish ancestry. She wrote; "The genuine faith of my Irish parents instilled a deep love for God and others in our family." Perhaps this bit of Ireland in her, accounts for her lifelong loyalty to the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame.**

**She attended St. Mary Grade and High School in Lorain, Ohio. The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters staffed both schools. When Mary Ellen was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Sister Ellen Van Antwerp invited her to consider God's call to be an IHM. Sister's continued support and interest inspired Mary Ellen to accept that call. She was received on January 2, 1947 and given the religious name of Sr. Helen Joseph.**

**For 27 years, Mary Ellen taught in grades 5-8 in the following IHM schools: St. Matthew, Detroit, St. Mathew, Flint, St. Mary, Akron, St. Mark, Cleveland, St. Timothy, Trenton, and St. Michael, Monroe. While missioned to Cleveland, she made a Cursillo. She wrote: "This experience helped me see myself as a unique individual gifted by God. This grace that I received opened me to God**

and to others in a special way. I recognized a new freedom and greater ability to take risks."

Because of the Cursillo experience, Mary Ellen felt the need to take time to participate in spiritual opportunities offered by the community. With the encouragement of Margaret Brennan, Mary Ellen participated in directed retreats and summer Houses of Prayer. She wrote, "During the 70's, I was blessed with a year at Visitation. I was also given the opportunity to visit the Holy Land. This trip made the scriptures come alive, as I actually followed the paths that Jesus had taken. I also made a 30-day retreat, which was a real turning point for me. I was profoundly affected by the outpouring of God's tremendous love for everyone."

At this time, Mary Ellen felt called to ministry in North Carolina, which was one-half percent Catholic. She accepted the principalship at Blessed Sacrament Grade School in Burlington. She wrote, "As principal I will endeavor to form a community of faith. This new ministry calls forth my love for God and God's people, my organizational skills, my general ability to work with and for people, and my professional skills. I desire to help others come to know the Lord and deepen their relationship with Him and thus come to greater acceptance of themselves and their giftedness."



**Mary Ellen spent seven years at Blessed Sacrament School. At one point there was a chance that she wouldn't return, as the parish had no funds to pay her salary. The parishioners said, "WE will find the funds " and they did.**

**Blessed Sacrament school was deeply affected by Mary Ellen's presence. Maxine Kelley wrote, "Sr. Mary Ellen came to Burlington and Blessed Sacrament School and immediately made herself a vital part of the educational community. She has been most productive in building an excellent educational program. Not only did she work within the parameters of the church, but she also sought ways in the community to make the school better. She has gained the respect of educators in this area for her ability and for her understanding of children's needs. The children and parents of the school have gained much as a result of her leadership and dedication."**

**Do any of us have a playground named for us? In Burlington, Mary Ellen does.**

**K. L. Ketchum, the mayor of Burlington, proclaimed May 30, 1984 as SISTER MARY ELLEN GINTY DAY. The proclamation lists her many gifts to the community. These gifts include: teaching religion and algebra, while being principal; serving on the parish council and being**

a eucharistic minister; continuing her own education by completing a computer course; being instrumental in obtaining 2 computers for the school; unselfishly giving her love and time to the children of Blessed Sacrament School and church; visiting the sick; being bookkeeper, payroll clerk, nurse, and friend to many children over the years; giving her support to the children by attending all after-school activities such as sporting events, and being very deeply involved in the Home-School Association. I further encourage all the citizens of Burlington, Sr. Mary Ellen's present and former students and their parents and the parishioners of Blessed Sacrament Parish to express their appreciation to Sr. Mary Ellen Ginty for her tireless efforts and dedication."

Later in 1984, Mary Ellen began to work for Halifax Community College in Weldon, North Carolina. In this ministry she felt that she was proclaiming God's good news by helping others appreciate, accept and love themselves. In working with these adults and aiding them in becoming literate, she was helping them improve their status and thus was giving liberty to the educationally imprisoned. What joy she experienced as some elders now experienced the joy of being able to read. Through being able to read, whole new worlds opened to them. She held these GED classes in a beauty parlor, in a child care center,



and in a mall. While teaching for the college, Mary Ellen also was the secretary and treasurer of St. John the Baptist Church.

Because of eye problems, in 1994 Mary Ellen returned to the motherhouse. She continued to give service by being a receptionist at St. Mary Center, taking charge of the Opportunity Shop, where she was sensitive to the needs of the sisters who were unable to go shopping, by working in the print shop and serving on the funeral hospitality committee. Knowing that her strongest gifts were in math and finance, her final services were in the finance office.

In 1999 she was beginning to accept her diminishment and was crossing a difficult boundary from independence to dependence.

Sr. Pat Soltez remarked that Mary Ellen's whole being affirmed her beautiful spirit. Peg O'Shea said Mary Ellen was the holy woman for ordinary people.

Mary Ellen, we thank you for your quiet dedication for 56 years as an IHM and for your spirituality which permeated all that you did. We will remember your kind and generous manner and your quiet dedicated life. We admire your resilient spirit in the midst of your physical pain and loss of eye sight.

**May all of us-your family, your IHM Community,  
and your friends, be consoled by our faith.**

**May we find comfort as we recall Jeremiah's  
words: "I know the plans I had in mind for you,  
says the Lord"... "plans to give you a future full of  
hope, for I have loved you with an everlasting  
love. I have called you and you are mine."**

**Margaret McGinley, IHM**

**12/1/02**