



Remembering Sister Marie Annette Herbst, IHM May 21, 1913 - April 3, 2007

We have come together to remember and celebrate the life of a gracious, gentle and generous woman, our Sister Marie Annette. "She was always even-tempered," one of the nursing assistants said of her.

Sister Marie Annette, named Marguerite Helen, the only child of Charles Herbst and Charlotte Devitt, was born in Huron County, Mich., on May 21, 1913. Mrs. Herbst had come from Canada. Mr. Herbst was a native of Michigan. He was a carpenter and owned a small grocery store. Sister Marie Annette often spoke of what a good carpenter he was!

For her elementary grades, Sister Marie Annette attended Huron County Public Schools in Pinnebog, Port Austin and Port Crescent, Mich. She wrote that Mr. Bennett, the father of our Sister Marie James, had made arrangements for a neighborhood friend of hers to live in one of our convents while going to high school in Detroit. He did the same for her while she attended Girls' Catholic Central High School, Detroit. "I felt very much at home there and enjoyed my four years," she wrote. Although it seems that her parents moved to Detroit before Marguerite's graduation.

While the Herbst family lived in Port Huron, Mich., Sister Marie Annette's first cousin, Sister Mary David Moore, whose family lived in the "thumb area," lived with the Herbst family for one year while attending St. Stephen High School, Port Huron. Sister Marie Annette and her parents always considered Mary David their postulant since they introduced her to the IHMs.

Mrs. Herbst was a very spiritual and generous person. At one time she had a desire to be a religious herself. So her parents understood and supported Marguerite's desire to enter the IHM congregation. It was on July 1, 1932, that Marguerite came to Monroe. That was an exciting time for the congregation. It was the summer when our sisters were moving into the sparkling-new 1932 building for the first time.

That summer, when the sisters were going back on mission, on August 16, there was a terrible car accident in Flat Rock. The driver of the car, who was taking the sisters to Detroit, died in the accident, as did our Sister Marie Annette Horndash. Sister had been friend and mentor to Marguerite Herbst. After consulting with the Horndash family and Mother General, Sister Vigilia Burns, the Postulant Mistress, offered that name, Sister Marie Annette, to Marguerite at Reception. She said that she has been ever grateful to Sister Vigilia for her thoughtfulness.

In 1933, as a second year novice, Sister Marie Annette for a short time taught sixth grade at Saint Joseph School, Monroe. In 1934 she was assigned to Saint Philip's Elementary School, Battle Creek, Mich. From then until 1969 Sister Marie Annette taught all of the subjects in middle grades throughout Michigan and at Saint Mary's School, Lorain, Ohio. After having earned a masters degree in library science in the 1950s, sister served as elementary school librarian in schools in the Metro Detroit area until she retired to the Motherhouse in 1983. From her writings, we can glean that Sister Marie Annette loved being a librarian and was most instrumental in establishing libraries in several of our elementary schools.

Sister Marie Annette was a private person. She was not a "mixer." Her classmates have told me that Marie Annette was hard to get to know. However, from conversations with her and from her writings, we find that Marie Annette was outgoing and lively with her duties as

teacher and librarian. On her Page of Life Marie Annette wrote, "I met many precious children and dedicated parents who have remained faithful to me." She told me that one of her special interests was planning things to beautify her classroom. She wanted it to be a place of joy and happiness for the children.

Star of the Sea Elementary School, Grosse Pointe, Mich., was Sister Marie Annette's last assignment. She was the librarian there for 12 years. At the time of her retirement, she received kudos from the principal, staff, children and parents. Among other things, Mr. Hopp, the principal said, "Sister Annette taught us in an extraordinary fashion that efficiency and orderliness is a uniquely warm and personal way of caring."

Sister Marie Annette told me that she found great joy in doing things for other people, especially when it was a surprise. She kept in touch with many friends through her letter writing. There was a notebook in her room dating from 1983 to the 2000 where she kept track of each communication she made plus the date, to whom she wrote and the reason for writing. She wrote, "My special hobby is writing letters and sending cards to sick people, lonely people and elderly people. It is very rewarding."

In 1982 Sister Marie Annette began to have health problems, so the next year--her Golden Jubilee Year--she moved to the Motherhouse and continued to be of service in many ways. In May 1993, Sister Marie Annette broke her right hip. Then in January 1994 she broke her left hip. At this time it was necessary for her to move into the Health Care Center.

Sister Marie Annette wrote that she lived her life trying to radiate the love of Christ to others; that she frequently felt the presence of God and that she was ready whenever God called.

God has called, Marie Annette, and true to your word you seemed ready. You had prayed to enter Eternal Life glowing with peace and gratitude. Now we pray with you that your prayer has been answered.

Written by Sr. Patricia A. O'Donnell, IHM
Read by Sr. Jean Ann Campana, IHM
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