



Remembering Sister Mary Ivan Bach, IHM

July 17, 1916 - Sept. 29, 2008

Sister Mary Ivan was born in Detroit and was baptized at Holy Trinity Church. She was given the name Mary Rose. Her parents were William Bach of German descent and her mother was Margaret Mahony of Irish descent. Sister Mary Ivan was the oldest of four girls. Her sisters were Helen, Mildred and Esther.

Mr. Bach was born in Cleveland and had traveled on a business trip to Detroit where he met Mary Ivan's mother; they married there and the three oldest daughters were born in Detroit.

After completing eight years of grade school at St. Anne's, Detroit, Mary Rose and her family moved

to Cleveland where Esther was born.

Mary Rose's mother encouraged her to take music, so she continued her music education in high school at Villa Maria Academy in Wickliffe, Ohio. After playing the Nocturne by Chopin at one of her recitals, she wrote: "At this recital I was very nervous but managed by sheer willpower to hide my nervousness. Poor Chopin—if he turned over for every incorrect note I played, he certainly must have been a lively corpse!"

Mary Rose wrote that in 1936 during a retreat at St. Mary of the Woods College she knew that she had a religious vocation. She felt the call to be a teacher, so sought the IHMs, who she knew had a reputation as excellent teachers.

Mary Rose entered the IHM congregation in September 1936 and at her reception was given the name Sister Mary Ivan. She professed first vows in 1939 and final vows in 1942.

Sister was proud of several relatives in the Benedictine Order and of her cousin, Father Peter Deane, S.J. Another cousin, Sister Mel, is a Humility of Mary Sister.

Sister Mary Ivan's first mission was to St. Mary School in Akron. She wrote: "It amused me that while breathing in Goodyear and Goodrich fumes, I had to write to Monroe for a pair of rubber boots." Her second mission was St. Hugo's—a complete contrast: incomparable beauty on every side. "It was a privilege to be a pioneer on this mission," she wrote.

From 1938 to 1951 Sister Mary Ivan taught instrumental music, trained choirs and choral groups. In later years her main ministry was teaching chemistry and physics as well as Math I, II, III, and IV. She was awarded several National Science Foundation grants during the summers between regular school years. She also found time to write seven published articles in Catholic education periodicals between 1941 and 1963 under the name Mary Rose Bach.

In 1978 sister was named Director of IHM Adult Education for Bedford Schools; classes were held at St. Mary Academy. Four years later she worked in the General Business Office for 10 years, where she maintained medical records for the sisters. Then for four years she assisted in archives. While there she wrote, "As I experience my own 60th Jubilee, I come to appreciate

more fully our congregational history and contributions to the Church in the United States, especially in Michigan and in other countries."

Sister Mary Ivan was an avid reader, loved learning and teaching, and, despite her loss of hearing, very little escaped her regarding current events. She was aware of the pain and suffering of people in the United States and in other countries and responded to this awareness in her daily prayer.

Sister Mary Ivan was adept in sewing, needlepoint, quilting, collecting stamps and writing poetry. Among her papers is a certificate "Award of Recognition, Famous Poet for 1996." She was a woman of many gifts and used them generously.

Above all, Sr. Mary Ivan was a woman of faith and prayer, as testified in her Book of Life quote, "Devoted to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin-the first glimpse of the IHM Rule pleased me very much and set me journeying on highways and byways that would keep me occupied for 60 years." Now more than 70 years, Sister Mary Ivan enriched her prayer life through the any pilgrimages she was privileged to make -- the most inspiring among them was the one to the Holy Land.

Mary Ivan looked forward to several years of prayer and contemplation during the renovation of the Motherhouse, but wrote that God had other plans for her: that of caring for her blind sister, Mildred, which she did with remarkable compassion and patience.

In spite of an illness which affected your speech, I know you carried a grateful, contemplative heart. May our Divine Shepherd receive you with open arms, fulfilling His Eucharistic promise of eternal life.

Sister Charlotte Walby, IHM
October 1, 2008