

Remembering Mary Margaret Davis, IHM
May 21, 1935 – Nov. 20, 2025

Sister Mary Margaret was born in 1935 in Cleveland, Ohio, to Albert and Velaina Davis. Mary was the oldest of six children: Patricia, Kathleen, Helen, Rita and William. The family moved to Detroit, Michigan, in 1937, and she attended Christ the King Elementary School and Our Lady of Mercy High School, both in Detroit. Growing up, her family was active in the Catholic Church.

Mary attended St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, for two years before entering the IHM community in 1955. Mary's father died in 1978, and her Mother died in 1995. Her sister Kathleen has also died.

In 1969, Mary earned a Master of Arts degree, majoring in secondary administration from Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. She taught at St. Mary of Redford in Detroit, St. Thomas in Ann Arbor and St. Mary Academy in Monroe. She was also the Academy's principal for seven years.

In her files is a letter from Ellen Novak written in 2000. "Dear Sister, I graduated from St. Mary Academy in 1969. You were a very important person in my life ... You were a strong, compassionate, intelligent woman. I hadn't had that experience of women, or knowledge that women could be that way. Since I became a mom, I've realized not only that I finished high school because of Sister Mary Gregory, but also that much of what I do as a parent I learned from you. Thank you."

For three years, Mary had an opportunity to live and work in the New Ulm, Minnesota, Community. In the community, there were four men, including the diocese's bishop and five women. For her work experience, Mary was the superintendent of adult education for the Diocese. The vitality, the creativity, and the positive benefits that marked this thriving New Ulm community were remembered by Mary throughout her life.

While in New Ulm, Mary joined the fledgling organization "Witness for Peace," which was taking its first group-two hundred strong, to Nicaragua to protect the farmers as they harvested their coffee crop. The Contra War was raging there, so their mission was to work with the farmers in bright yellow T-shirts, hoping that the planes would not drop bombs on so many U.S. citizens mingled in with the Nicaraguans. The plan worked and the crops got harvested.



Mary had already done some acts of nonviolent civil disobedience both in Washington, DC and in Minnesota, protesting the U.S.-sponsored Contra War and the making of bombs at Honeywell Corporation.

The next step seemed logical – go to Nicaragua and experience more of how this war was impacting daily life in this impoverished, tiny country. So, she spent five years living on a landfill next to the Managua city garbage dump. Mary set up a literacy center and library where she taught Spanish and read to children who could not attend school. These children had to pick through garbage daily in the hopes of finding something to eat and something to sell to help the family buy food.

It was around this time that her deeper self began to surface. Before this time, she was much more into doing; now she has become more aware of her deep desire for more time for prayer and reflection, for being in touch with the beauty of nature, and for her place in the whole of creation. She came to realize that all she had was all she really needed.

After returning to the States in 1992, Mary joined the SuCasa Catholic Worker Community in Chicago, Illinois. This community provided shelter for political asylees from Central America who sought refuge from the wars there, and for homeless Hispanic families in the Chicago area.

On her Ministry Commitment Form in 2010, Mary wrote: "My IHM spirituality and the Catholic Worker philosophy, which I've embraced these past 19 years, have fit together as hand-in-glove. The IHM commitment to simple living, peace, justice and sustainability aligns with the four pillars of the Catholic Worker: simple lifestyle, community, nonviolence and personalism. They form a single blueprint for carrying on Jesus' mission." After nearly 19 years as a Catholic Worker, Sister Mary Margaret retired to the Motherhouse in January 2011.

A proud moment for Mary Margaret occurred in 2013 when she was inducted into the St. Mary Catholic Central Athletic Hall of Fame for supporting equal opportunity for girls' sports teams and starting girls' competitive athletics at St. Mary Academy. She accomplished this while ministering at St. Mary Academy.

Not long after coming to Monroe, Mary made an application to begin jail ministry with undocumented immigrants awaiting deportation to their countries of origin. The Sheriff's Department always answered "no" because she could not prove she was a minister, priest, chaplain or lawyer. Upon reflection, she said, "I realized that I, too, was undocumented." However, the Beverly Hills United Methodist Church initiated an ecumenical outreach program to the undocumented prisoners in Monroe and Mary was able to join them. They met one-on-one with the men, giving them the opportunity to tell their stories – most for the first time. The prisoners asked for a Spanish Mass in the jail,

and Mary made it happen with the help of friends. Once a month, a Spanish-speaking priest would come to say a Mass at the detention center, and he was joined by three or four IHM Sisters and a Spanish-speaking music minister. It was a great ministry.

At the Motherhouse, Mary visited with sisters in health care, took them outside for some fresh air or to ceramics classes, and was a faithful ringer of the Angelus every day. She was active with the IHM Peacemakers.

Throughout her life, Mary Margaret devoted herself to education, answering the cry of the poor, and confronting social injustice through prayerful action. Even in her later years, when the loss of her sight and hearing made this commitment increasingly challenging, she refused to step back. Determined to stay engaged, Mary Margaret asked Melissa Hug, an IHM Associate, to read to her. Melissa graciously read three afternoons a week for many years. Their time together kept Mary Margaret informed and active—and forged a deep and lasting friendship.

Finally, Mary Margaret wanted to share this message with all of you:

“I am often surprised by the depth of gratitude that wells up inside me. Prayer is my anchor. I am most thankful for the blessings of community life. I love and cherish our mission.”

Delivered by Elizabeth Walters, IHM, Dec. 18, 2025

Written by Roberta Richmond, IHM, with additions by Elizabeth Walters.