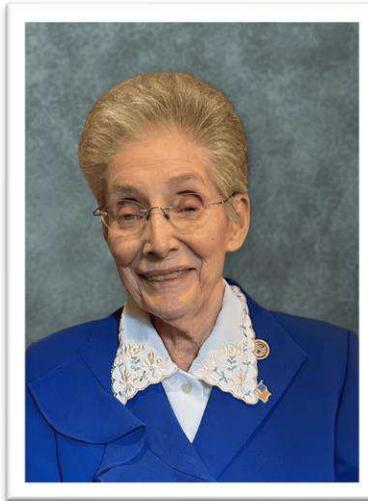


Remembering Marie Theresa Magrie, IHM

June 15, 1937 – Nov. 13, 2025

Sister Marie Theresa Magrie, also known as "The Singing Nun," was born June 15, 1937. She was the only child born to Elizabeth "Lillian" and Carl Magrie. She loved her parents dearly and took care of her mother after her father died.

Maria attended public grade school and went to Saint Rose (Detroit) for high school. Since the building housed both the grade school and the high school, upper-grade students would enter through the grade school. One day, when Marie Theresa was making her way through, a grade-school teacher called her into her classroom. The teacher, Sister Ann Currier, asked Marie Theresa if she would like to become an IHM Sister. Marie Theresa later stated she thought "the words fell out of the sky!" During her senior year, she encouraged her parents to visit Monroe with her to see what the place looked like. Marie Theresa thought it a good idea to become a Sister, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Today, after 69 years of religious life, she is home with us at last. Of course, there is much to the story between the day she entered and the day she was called home to eternal life.



It comes as no surprise that Marie Theresa was a great singer, taking after her mother and a fine pianist, taking after her father. From an early age, she was engaged in piano, organ and voice lessons. After entering the community, Sister Alphonse Mary, whom Marie Therese addressed as "Alpho," introduced her to the organ in the Motherhouse Chapel. Marie Theresa was delighted to play! Her musical studies continued with lessons in the Indian Village neighborhood of Detroit. A younger sister with whom Marie Theresa lived was given the charge of taking Sister to lessons.

During her early years as an IHM, Marie Theresa was missioned to several grade schools and later to high schools of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Westchester, Illinois; Brother Rice and Marian schools in Bloomfield Hills; and Marygrove College. She excelled in choral and musical education, instrument instruction and all aspects of performance, leading school musicians, drama departments and choral groups into the greater community through performances. At her students' request, Sister Marie Theresa even composed a school song.

Sister Marie Theresa's longtime music ministry filled her life with blessings and adventure. One of her students was the first daughter of Lee Iacocca. After Lee's wife died and he decided to remarry, Sister was invited to sing during the celebration on his yacht. Her beloved friends and families of IHM school (Westchester) generously invited her to travel to Europe in

the summer to sing at the great cathedrals, which she greatly admired. While she accepted the invitation, her love of God and for others overshadowed her immense fear of flying.

Marie Theresa traveled for performances and competitions and received many awards for her wonderful singing, playing and musical education. While on faculty at IHM Westchester, she was awarded the Steinway Award for Excellence and Piano in Chicago. In Michigan, she was involved with various sports teams as a soloist at sports arenas. She dearly recalled opening exhibitions for the Detroit Pistons and Detroit Lions, singing the national anthem at Detroit Red Wings games, and becoming good friends with Gordie Howe and his wife.

Her performances with major league sports franchises endeared her to her students at Brother Rice High School. They also petitioned for her to sing for their teams and she did! She loved her students and would do anything for them. A long-ago newspaper article cited her ability as a "matchmaking nun," leading to marriage among some of her students. Sister Marie Theresa sang at their weddings and shared in their blossoming families. One family has remained in her life from her residence in Bloomfield Hills through her move to the IHM Senior Living Community. Through my friendship with Marie Theresa and my often accompanying her, she has included me in her family as well. We will hear from them later in the liturgy.

After Marie Theresa left formal education to care for her mother, who had Alzheimer's, she continued to contribute to the community and to socialize her independent ministry, using professional business cards to introduce her talents. She raised funds and awareness for cancer research through an annual bicycle marathon, served the poor by meeting their needs, brought others into this ministry and continued to serve as a musician and vocalist for area parishes, choirs, funeral homes and liturgies at Catholic hospitals. She especially loved her work at Saint Joseph Hospital, where she planned liturgy, led the choir, visited the sick and consoled the dying. Many friendships were made in her ministries. We are honored to have those friends with us today and grateful for their love and support for Marie Theresa.

When the time came for Marie Theresa to come home to our IHM Motherhouse, she wanted me to be aware of two important facts. The first being that she had been her own boss for all these years. Secondly, she had no intention of giving up ministry to be a resident here. I told her that she was not going to give up ministry — we had plenty of jobs here for her! I took Marie Theresa around to the rooms of our residents and staff, to the sick and dying, and she sang her heart out to them. They loved her! Some said that they could sense God in her presence.

She founded a campus ministry for animals. So much so that she wrote in her Mission Commitment that her two ministries were singing to sisters and residents and caring for other living things; most people might guess this included the creatures on campus – cats, squirrels, geese, birds, even little insects. She also had a special relationship with the bullfrog

population near St. Joseph Pond on the property. I would start out singing "Jeremiah was a bullfrog," and when we got to the section of "Joy to the world, all the boys and girls," Maria would sing in her high soprano voice and the frogs would "sing" their response. Perhaps her voice inspired them, or maybe it was her presence. Whatever the reason, the frogs were friends too. After we went around singing for three or four people, Sister would ask, "Annie, where do the cats come in?" It was a cue to visit the cats outside. She never gave up her ministry!

Of all the people she visited or sang to, a few occasions touched her heart deeply. One was a resident and former IHM Sister who raised her arms to the heavens during the song and relaxed before going to God. The other was a resident of Italian descent who enjoyed Sister's daily renditions in praise of the Blessed Mother. When she died, her husband gave Sister a beautiful Marian statue in appreciation of her singing. Sister was often invited to sing at funeral services for the residents.

I would be remiss if I did not mention another meaningful piece of Marie Theresa's long ministry of mission. Twice during her life, Marie Theresa was invited to the White House for private dinners, first with President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan and later with President George Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush. Marie Theresa was a humble person, but she thought it might help if she attended these dinners, so she did.

I could continue for a long while to tell you about the life of this remarkable woman. Many of you can tell me much more. Later in the service, we will hear from two families touched by her life and ministry. And so, for now I say, "Arrivederci Maria!" Always, she would tell us that in Italian.

As I conclude this part of her Remembering, Ann Felder and Wendy Bair will sing an excerpt from one of Marie Theresa's many songs. The song is "Called to Love," which I refer to as the gospel according to Maria.

Written and delivered by Anne Mamienski, IHM, Nov. 20, 2025.