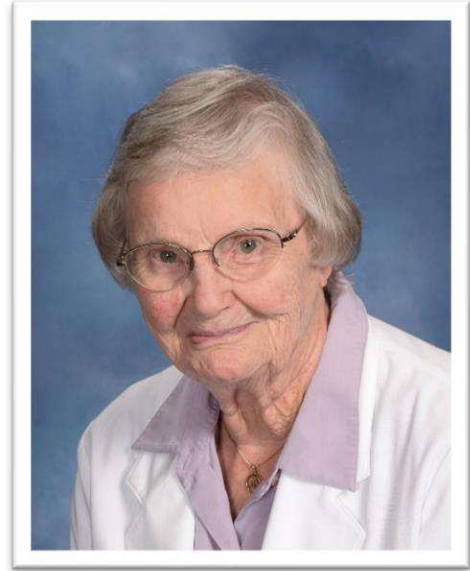


Remembering Patrice Marie Selby, IHM
Dec. 24, 1926 – April 5, 2026

Early life

We gather to remember and celebrate the life of Rose Grace Selby, IHM, age 99, and her jubilee in the IHM Congregation for 80 years.

Rose Grace Selby, the eighth of 10 children, known to many of us as Sister Patrice Marie Selby, IHM, or Patrice, or Gracie, was born on Dec. 24, 1926, in Crooksville, Ohio, to Patrick Earl Selby and Mary Anatasia Flowers Selby. Patrice was welcomed into the family by her siblings: Genevieve, Paul, Angie, Margaret, Joe, Fred, and Ed. She joined them later to welcome Tom and Marie. Patrice stated she grew up surrounded by boys since her older sister was eight years older and her younger sister, Marie, was eight years younger. I can picture Patrice running through the fields with her brothers, as we might say, making “good trouble.”



When Patrice was only two years old, the family moved to Akron, Ohio. When Patrice was only five, her oldest sister, Genevieve, entered the IHM Monroe Congregation and was given the name Sister Paulita. This was a tremendous loss for Patrice, as Genevieve was Patrice’s second mom. The family continued to grow with the births of Tom and Marie.

Patrice was educated by the Sisters of Humility of Mary and the Dominican Sisters of Akron, Ohio. Late in her sophomore year of high school, Patrice worked part-time for the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine at St. Thomas Hospital as a switchboard operator. Patrice quickly became a jill-of-all-trades, serving as a cashier, elevator operator, secretary, and admissions clerk.

Vocation

Patrice displayed an independent spirit throughout her lifetime. Her entry into our community in 1945 after high school came as a surprise to everyone. Patrice did not tell her parents and family until she was ready to leave for Monroe. Her sister, Paulita, found out when Mother Teresa McGivney asked her if she knew a Rose Grace Selby and showed her the letter of request.

Patrice told this story: “At an early age, I was aware of being called to religious life. In an eighth grade essay about what I wanted to do after finishing school, I wrote and

presented my desire to be a sister. I was then told by the teacher that I would never find a congregation that would take me.” Patrice said she never mentioned it again. However, happy memories of the annual family visits with Sr. Paulita lingered in her mind. Patrice said it was the “fun-loving nature, kindness and the IHM’s sense of humor” that attracted her. When Patrice left for Monroe in 1945, her three older brothers and two brothers-in-law were on active duty in World War II.

Patrice thought that most of her family, including the boys, friends and teachers, were amazed that, with her independent spirit, she survived the “rigidity” of the Novitiate during the 1940s. However, friends who accompany us in our lives are God’s gifts. I am aware that Patrice became close friends with Sisters Marie Gatza, Mary Ann Untener, Madonna Oswald, Ruth Glaser, and most especially Nora Duggan, with whom she lived many times.

Patrice’s gift of all trades, or transferable skills, followed her into the community. After Vatican II, Sisters were given greater freedom and agency to exercise greater personal responsibility and decision-making authority in their ministry. Her mission assignments included teacher, principal, full-time student, South and West Province Treasurer, and addiction training. She then became an addiction counselor in Raleigh, North Carolina, and a chaplain at Hanley-Hazelden Addiction Center in West Palm Beach, Florida, where she served for twenty-plus years. All provided her with ministry and friendship opportunities in Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, Minnesota, and Florida. Patrice stated that she was fortunate to have close friends and wise counselors to help in her discernment processes over these many years. I was fortunate to live in Memphis with Patrice when she, Dorothy Diederichs, and I shared ministry as the South and West Province team from 1979 to 1982.

The turning point

The major turning point came in Patrice’s life when she took herself to an addiction treatment center in Chicago in the early 1980s. She called Dorothy and me to say that she had decided to enter treatment. Patrice simply said, “I need help.” I was naively surprised, not having caught on that Patrice had an addiction issue. However, supportive of her honesty and vulnerability, I realized that she, like Mary, was walking into the unknown.

When Patrice asked me to give her remembering when she died, I asked her what was important for me to share at her funeral? Patrice, with clarity, stated for me to please recall the story of her struggle, acceptance, and ongoing recovery from addiction. She also said, “Don’t make it too long....” I will try, yet she was 99 years old!

Although life’s journeys often lead us down new and different paths, for some, life tends to lead us right back to the past. Patrice’s life did this type of journey. Patrice admitted her first patient into the treatment center at St. Thomas Hospital, Akron, as a high school junior. There, she actually worked with two of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia. Sr. Ignatia was Patrice’s supervisor.

Patrice was a living connection to the earliest years of the formation of the AA program. And Patrice, later in her life, returned to the path of helping others into sobriety.

Patrice spoke of a significant experience at St. Thomas Hospital, where she was working while in high school. Late one night, while Patrice sat alone at age 16, a “shabby” looking man tapped on the window of the admissions office. He had heard that he could find help at that facility. When she told him he would have to come back in the morning, he told her that “he had ridden the rails from Kentucky and that he would sleep outside in the yard and come back tomorrow.” She asked him to wait and called Ward 290. Dr. Bob came down and escorted the man upstairs. Two weeks later, the same man, now clean-shaven with a shirt and tie, smiling, approached her window. There, Patrice first witnessed what she called the “miracle of healing.”

Alcohol had no place in Patrice’s life for the next twenty years. In the late 1960s, having been introduced to a glass of wine at dinner, her alcoholism was triggered and she became a closet drinker. In 1974, Patrice became acutely aware that her drinking, though sporadic, was problematic.

In 1980, after an extended visit with her dying mother in Akron, Patrice drove back to Memphis, arriving late at night. Dorothy and I were on the road. Alone, Patrice had a “drink to relax.” The following day, she was informed by a friend that she, Patrice, had called her at two o’clock in the morning to do provincial business. The following day, her friend asked if she needed help. Realizing that she must have had a blackout, Patrice accepted that indeed, she did need help. She soon called Dorothy and me, concluding by stating, “I just made arrangements to enter an addiction program in Chicago. I need help.”

Afterward, Patrice proclaimed to many of us, with a deep sense of gratitude showing on her face, “That was my first experience with surrender.” Her “second surrender” was a commitment to follow the aftercare plan given to her by the treatment center – to go to an AA meeting every day and say something at the meeting. She did. When Patrice told our President, Mary Kinney, and other friends of her addiction illness, their response was: “How can we help?” Patrice was vulnerable, profoundly honest, and tremendously grateful for the support of leadership and her friends in the community.

Patrice soon brought the issue of addiction to the forefront of our IHM community by writing a proposal to the Chapter in 1982 about the need to address addiction among us. The enactment created a committee to educate the community about addiction and provide support for our sisters in recovery.

Thus began Patrice’s journey into sobriety, addiction training, and finally cofounding the program at Hanley-Hazelden Center in West Palm Beach, Florida and ministering there for over 20 years. Steven Miller, past clinical director of Hanley, said: “There is no doubt that Patrice played a key role in the recovery of hundreds, if not thousands of patients.” While serving there, Patrice also fulfilled a childhood dream of training Davey, a service dog who went to work with her for a couple of years, putting patients at ease and

breaking through client barriers. His wagging tail, soft fur and friendliness created an atmosphere in which even the most reluctant client could become involved in treatment. Patrice loved her healing ministry and had the thrill of finding her sense of purpose, a coming together of failings and strength, suffering and resilience. It required a lifetime of faithful steps. She said, "I prepared my whole life for this ministry."

Going home

At age 80, Patrice began planning to return to the Motherhouse in Monroe. Not for retirement, but to continue the ministry of presence among the local community, at Paula's House, AA groups and consulting within and outside the IHM community. However, in 2008, Patrice was asked to return to the Hanley-Hazelden Center to assist the staff in adapting to some needed changes. Off she drove, back to Florida, and for six more months continued her ministry there, providing a stabilizing, grounding presence, support and training for newly hired staff and the new chaplain.

Returning to Monroe, Patrice continued her ministry in the area by attending AA meetings and mentoring new AA members. Visiting Paula's House, the women there never forgot the sister who visited with them, shared her personal story, and never talked down to them. The women who attended the Petoskey House Retreats for Women in Recovery responded just as those at Paula's House did. Women sought her out in 1s, 2s, and 3s to share more with her. Patrice witnessed the 12 steps for them. And here in health care, the five amigas met only a few days before her death, bringing the AA meeting to her.

While experiencing health issues and moving into the health care center, Patrice did not hesitate to make recommendations to the health care staff and leadership (and to many of us), yet always in the spirit of gratitude for her caregivers and her beloved community. I cannot count the number of times Patrice said, "We are so fortunate for all God and the community have given us. The loving care we receive in health care is over and above!"

Patrice lived the serenity prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Patrice prayed for that wisdom daily and shared it with us.

I have one last story to share. When Patrice was in the hospital once for testing, the doctor came in and reported, "The MRI of your brain showed there was no stroke." Patrice responded, with a straight face, "But did you see my brilliance?" The Doctor stopped, looking startled. Patrice let out a little smile, and her visitors burst out laughing.

Yes, Patrice, we, your friends, family, sisters, colleagues, and caregivers experienced you as a courageous, independent woman of wisdom, truth and integrity. You are a storyteller, compassionate, caring, insightful, honest, with common sense and much humor. Patrice, a woman of deep faith who surrendered her last breath to God on Easter Sunday, we will continue to treasure you, learn from you, and count on you. You

are a gift that just keeps on giving. May God, the Good Shepherd, embrace you tenderly. You are missed already.

Written and delivered by Marge Polys, IHM, April 16, 2026