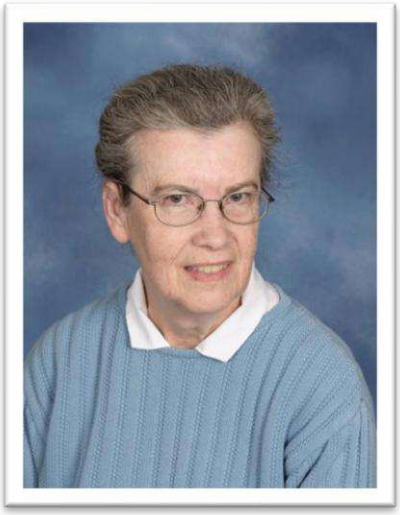
Remembering Anne Marie Murphy, IHM
Feb. 15, 1946 – Oct. 16, 2026



“The tapestry of Anne’s life is a series of patches, stitched by hand with integrity and love. Anne could often be heard saying, “I could make something with that.” She clipped pictures from magazines to use in her classic homemade birthday cards. She used fabric scraps upcycled from worn clothes or remnants for other projects. Anne was definitely into upcycling before it was a trend.

As we honor her, we remember some of the main patches she stitched together to create the story of her life.

Anne was a “perpetual learner.” She loved to read and to help others learn to read or find books to read. Her list of courses, CEUs, and workshops she completed to support her ministry or broaden her spirituality was vast. Although her housemates throughout the years would tell you she didn’t have a competitive bone in her body, Anne’s love of learning made her the Jeopardy queen in her local communities for decades, as she quietly spoke the answers before the contestants weighed in.

One of the largest blocks in her patchwork, with many interlocking pieces, was that of caring. Anne cared deeply for others on the level of mind, body and spirit throughout her life. She volunteered with Meals on Wheels on holidays and took time to discover the uniqueness of others and crafted a connection with each person based on what she found; each one genuine and without status or fanfare. She cared for patients in difficult moments, carefully explained complicated test results and took pride in conducting staff physicals and encouraging them to take care of themselves so they could care for others. The one exception to the rule was her inability to say much about diet to those who knew her long-standing aversion to vegetables. On McGivney Way, Anne’s last residence, it was clear that she considered chocolate pudding her vegetable … after all, at the root of all chocolate is a bean.

Whether she was studying, working as a nurse/nurse practitioner, librarian, or serving on the OSP-IHM Haiti Committee, the thread of faith and her loving hands stitched all her ministries together. In particular, her time serving as part of L’Arche, an intentional community where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together, her librarian work and trips to Haiti proved to be pivotal patches of growth and change on her journey through life.

Tucked in her bible was a handwritten note of prayer:

“May your Faithful be strengthened, O God, by your blessing
In grief may you be their consolation
In peril, their protection
In tribulation, their power to endure.”

Other patches were shapes of simplicity. Anne lived very simply without imposing her choices on others. When she didn’t have a car … she cleverly saw her shoes as a means of travel and counted their purchase as a travel expense.

On her walks, Anne paid attention to the messages along the way and noticed the changes in sights and sounds. Once home, she would ponder her encounters and write little notes about what she witnessed or experienced that day, recognizing each as meaningful.

One of her entries included, *“Birds can sing as easily on a dead tree as on a live one, but they build their nests in living trees.”* And in another reflection, she reveals: *“Illness is embarrassing: you are not in control of your body. In reality, you are not in control of anything – you need God’s support in everything. So, learning to accept disability is a model for understanding God is the source of any stability that you have.”*

Anne’s way of being, pondering the encounters of each day, was best summed up in her entry by Robert Wicks, *“Prayerfulness: our eyes fully open to the will of God in our daily interactions.”*

Like laying out fabric pieces to be stitched together in a pattern, Anne loved having a plan for life revealed in a series of projects. She planned picnics with friends and vacations with family, as well as what she would do each day. On one occasion, while walking with friends on unmarked trails, she commented, “If we pass this pole one more time, we will be officially lost.”

Even as she dealt with her journey through memory loss, she was comforted by having a plan. She made choices along the way for how she would keep living her life, including choosing hospice care. Just three weeks ago, during Kathy’s visit, Anne ended the time with her familiar question, “So what’s the plan?” Kathy responded, “To keep loving you and make sure you are comfortable; the rest is up to you and God.” To which Anne replied, “Sounds like a good plan to me.”

There is a poem by William Stafford that helps bring together the many patches of encounter and experience that created Anne’s tapestry of life:

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among things that change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can’t get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt or die;

and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

Anne, may the threads of love that you have blessed us with remind us that no word or act is insignificant in the tapestry of life. Thank you for the gift you have been to each of us, to the IHM Community, to your family, and all you have ministered to and with. Thank you for all the hand-stitched moments of integrity and love. Rest now in the peace of God who never let go of the thread of your life.

Written by Kathy Onderbeke, IHM and delivered by Lynne Moldenhauer, IHM.
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