

REMEMBERING MARGUERITE CECILIA DALY, IHM
Nov. 28, 1923-May 8, 2010



Thanks to Father Simeon Daly, OSB, (Marguerite's brother) for the historical data about Marguerite's parents.

“In reflecting upon the journey of my life, regardless of time, place, persons and/or events, the one outstanding gift my parents gave me (and it remains with me today) is how vivid and clear the Presence of God has been in my life.”

Thus, Marguerite begins her page of life – distinctive, clear, immersed in a deep spirituality lived generously, graciously, joyfully and simply her entire life.

We gather this afternoon around our beloved sister, sister-in-law, aunt, great aunt, classmate, co-worker, kindred sister and a very dear friend – around the meaning of her life: Marguerite's life as a word made flesh. Let us remember her. Remembering draws meaning from a lifetime. What legacies our memories are. They allow us to

keep a life vital! Allow us to remain “in touch,” faithful! Our memories and the way we use them can be a kind of victory over the separation that death is. “To remember is to know that life and death together are transformation into God.” A memory brings back a presence that defies the absence of death. And so we begin.

Marguerite's family background is unique. Her maternal family, the Ginzels, were very well-known in Wyandotte Mich., that pre-dated Civil War days. Her grandfather was a contractor. Marguerite Ginzel, her mother, attended St. Mary Academy in Monroe.

Marguerite's paternal grandparent was known as Squire William Daly, one of the founders of Dearborn Mich. The Daly name is well-known in southern Wayne County since Squire Daly came from Ireland in 1837 and settled on farmlands on Telegraph and Michigan avenues. Streets such as Beech-Daly and Dearborn's Daly Elementary School are named for the present-day Daly family.

One of Phillip Daly's sister also attended St. Mary Academy in Monroe; hence, Marguerite Ginzel met Phillip Daly at get-togethers between family and friends from the academy.

Phillip Daly was reasonably prosperous; co-owned the Gleason and Daly Sand and Gravel Company which dealt in sand, coal and ore and had three large freighters that plied the Great Lakes. Mrs. Daly belonged to the Detroit Yacht club and a number of literary societies. The Dalys lost everything overnight due to the financial crash.

At this time, the family moved to Wyandotte and became part of Grandfather Ginzel's household. The crash had a severe impact on Mr. Daly. It is said of Mrs. Daly that while sitting in a pew in St. Aloysius Church in downtown Detroit, reading the want ads of a newspaper looking for a job as a housekeeper or maid, she saw a blurb for sales position for Compton's Encyclopedia. She applied and received the job. For five or more years, Marguerite's mother supported the family as a door-to-door salesperson. She did so well that she won top honors in the state and one year was company salesperson of the year for the country!

Although Mr. Daly always had an office job and was an accountant, his first job was as a common laborer in the shipping department of a toy factory at 16 cents an hour. After a short period of time, competence was recognized and he became a bookkeeper for the company until he took the position of treasurer of the Wyandotte News.

Born in Detroit on Nov. 28, 1923, Marguerite was the only girl amid three brothers: Richard and Phillip, the two oldest, and Tom the youngest.

Dick married and had four children. Up until her memory problems, Marguerite did keep in touch with Margaret, his wife, and the oldest daughter, Arlene. Dick died in the late seventies. Arlene and her husband Keith did visit Marguerite this past year (2009).

Phillip attended the Hall of the Divine Child; spent his high school years in Meinrad, Ind., at the Benedictine seminary high school. Later, Phil entered the Benedictine monastery, received the name Simeon and was ordained a Benedictine priest. Father Simeon, as he is known in the order, is now a retired theologian and librarian, residing in the health care center of the monastery. Before retirement, Simeon was responsible for the planning, development and implementation of the beautiful new abbey library. He was a librarian for 51 years, 49 years as the director and head librarian administrator.

Marguerite's younger brother, Tom, married Katie O'Brien and they have eight children: five boys and three girls: Tom, Patti, Jim, Mary, Theresa, Joey, John and Martin. All of them are married and graced the Daly clan with 26 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Marguerite's youngest brother was the founder and chairman of Daly-Merritt Insurance, a large family-owned agency based in Wyandotte and begun in 1953 in the parlor of his parent's home. Working door-to-door, with a reputation for hard work and integrity, the business flourished. It is now owned and operated by four of Tom's sons. Tom died in 2006 at the age of 79.

Marguerite attended St. Patrick-Wyandotte elementary and secondary schools. Marguerite participated in all the activities available for students at that time. She belonged to a group of five girls who were close friends all through grade and high school; some even kept in touch after she entered religious life. As a sophomore Marguerite played basketball; she ice-skated on Burrell slip behind the hospital. Marguerite was a loving, caring beautiful young woman. Every Friday evening, many of the high school students appeared at the Daly's basement to enjoy an evening of dancing to the tune of an old juke box, her brother Dick had acquired. Catherine Broughton (Sister Mary Delbert, IHM) was one of these students. The Broughton and Daly families were close friends.

Graduating in June 1942, Marguerite entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, Mich., on Sept. 8, 1942. While in religious life, Marguerite received her bachelor's degree from Marygrove College in Detroit and a Master of Library Science from Wayne State University, Detroit.

Both Father Simeon and Sister Marguerite entered their respective novitiates the same year – 1943. At the time of Marguerite's golden jubilee, Simeon shared a poem his dad had written a few weeks after they entered the novitiates, reconciling his feelings of loss with a parents' sense of pride in their children.

And I quote:

RECONCILED

Our little girl has left us,
She aspires to be a nun.
When you think of a vocation
Can you think of a better one?

Our little boy has left us too.
He to be a monk doth aspire
And after careful consideration

Can you think of a nobler desire?

Yes, Mom and I are lonely,
And our home has had a sober air;
But that these kids prove worthy
Shall always be our prayer.

God grant that they are successful,
And when their goals are won,
Please God make us worthy parents
Of a holy monk and nun.

Sister Marguerite's first mission was St. Matthew-Flint in 1945, teaching second grade. She loved her next place: Holy Rosary in Detroit, where from 1948 to 1956 she taught grades three and four, ministering to the needs of very poor students and the sisters with whom she lived. Marguerite was quick to see a need, and when she did, she jumped into action to get what was needed, never hesitating to ask friends and parents for help. She never spared herself physically. As one of her sister friends and co-worker said, "I could not have lived with a more selfless person than Marguerite Daly."

Marguerite was an excellent teacher. Those who worked and lived with her testify to how well she could teach little ones, middle grades and junior high as her ministry experiences demonstrate. As a critic teacher, Marguerite was appreciated by her student teachers as one wrote not too long ago, "...I do think of you and remember what a great critic teacher you were...you were ever so kind to me during a difficult period in my life...I'll always be grateful for you...Thank you." No matter what grade level, Marguerite was always gentle, kind and loving in her relationship with students. She never had to raise her voice; they listened to her; they trusted her; they knew she cared for them. As one student wrote, "Sister Marguerite was and is my hero."

After Holy Rosary, Marguerite became a pioneer at two different assignments: opening, in 1956, St. Peter Claver in Mobile Ala., and then in 1958, St. Cyprian in Riverview. She continued teaching third and fourth graders at St. Timothy, Trenton and St. Thomas Aquinas. At St. Boniface, she began with sixth graders and eventually taught eighth graders as well as establishing a first-rate library. After suffering through the hectic closing of St. Boniface, Marguerite moved to St. Vincent de Paul, continuing her work with eighth-graders and the library. Her last teaching assignment was returning to St. Cyprian in Riverview a second time, teaching eighth graders.

It was at this time, during her later years at St. Cyprian, that Marguerite was given a gift of traveling to Fatima, Lourdes and Rome with her Benedictine priest brother, Father Simeon Daly, OSB. This trip had a lasting spiritual effect on Marguerite whose simple journal records the excitement, and the deep peace felt at each site visited.

"... A few years ago, I had a chance to go to Lourdes. All the while I was there, Mary our Blessed Mother walked with me in a special way. I was so touched with what I experienced that I could not stay with the group. Every place I went, my heart was overwhelmed with joy and peace while my eyes cried buckets. To this day I cannot recall this trip without the gift of tears."

In 1978, Marguerite was asked to assume the responsibility of director of Hospitality House at Immaculata Convent in Detroit. She not only assumed responsibility for the entire operation of the physical plant, its budgets and its cars, but working with a core group established goals for living at Hospitality House. She describes this ministry at Immaculata in her commitment form for that year.

"I assume the Hospitality Ministry in the spirit of being sent. I feel the Hospitality House will give me the opportunity to use my gifts of organization and creativity. I also feel I can bring warmth, understanding and sharing to the Sisters I meet."

In 1982, called by the sisters of the vice province, Marguerite became treasurer for that province. Her gifts of support, concern, patience and understanding served all with whom she worked and lived. Along with treasurer responsibilities, Marguerite began working part time in the Motherhouse Library using her degree and skills. Again, her theme was serving others graciously with care and loving concern.

In 1984, Marguerite was asked to assume responsibility for Pagani, a center in the Motherhouse for retreats, meetings and space for IHM Sisters to stay while home in Monroe. This she added to her position

as vice province treasurer, feeling that she would “live rather than proclaim the Good News in these ministries; thus providing a peace-filled atmosphere so that other’s needs might be fulfilled.”

A year later, in 1985, Marguerite assumed full time responsibility for Pagani, a ministry she served faithfully, generously and graciously for 14 years until her retirement in July of 1999. Marguerite also continued her part-time task in the Motherhouse Library until 1997.

Marguerite by nature was shy, quiet, peaceful and gentle. When principles or values were at stake, she did not hesitate to speak up or act on behalf of the poor, the needy and the common good. She loved being with people, but to be an active participant in a group, she felt she needed to know the individuals. As a young woman at home, Marguerite was involved in many activities of the young. In community she became involved in all community activities, quietly and prayerfully. She loved working with the poor. She wrote in her IHM page of life:

“Poverty has so many sad faces. It taught me to see through the sadness and try to do something about them. After changing ministries from teaching to hospitality house, I had time to volunteer at various institutions: Rehab Institute of Detroit, Hospice of Providence Hospital, visiting and teaching young women in prison. The people I have met and/or worked with impacted this Spirit life of mine. The Grace of God is so immeasurable and its transformative power is in everyone and everything.”

At the same time, Marguerite sometimes suffered from an inferiority complex: that she wasn’t as smart as most sisters, or found it difficult to express herself in a group – not that she didn’t understand, but rather she felt timid and didn’t think she could find the appropriate words. I know our living together at St. Boniface assisted her in overcoming this. I made a difference in her life as she has made a tremendous difference in mine. Marguerite’s stint as director of the hospitality places (Immaculata and Pagani) allowed her to use her creativity and organizational skills – she blossomed in giving of herself to the needs of those who came into these areas for respite and peace.

Marguerite was a happy person, smiling and singing a lot. Patti, her eldest niece, says it best: “...it seems to me when remembering Sister Marguerite Daly, that she could best be described as someone who was always ‘quietly cheerful’...I remember Sister’s happy chuckle. She would greet us with a hug and that laugh. Closing my eyes and tightly hugging her back, I recognized that laugh as my Grandma Daly’s and later at the end of his life, as my Dad’s. Guess laughing runs in the Daly family. That’s what I want to do, too – leave this world laughing.”

Family was very special to Marguerite. When her parents had to move to Lourdes Retirement Center, she visited them every week. For years, I accompanied her; was with her when both parents died. She loved her brothers dearly: visited with Dick whenever he stayed at Tom’s; made as many retreats as she could at St. Meinrad Archabbey where she could spend time with Father Simeon; stopped in to visit with Tom and Katie; tried to maintain frequent contact with her nieces and nephews. Love of and for family was a special grace.

Marguerite has always had a deep spiritual life, living in the Presence of God, the Eucharist, Jesus, Mary, the Holy Spirit, reflective and centering prayer – these were her specialties. She was always searching for ways to grow in each area; would sign up for retreats, conferences, seminars that would enlighten her understanding; attempted to read whatever literature she could find to help her live these mysteries more fully. She describes her spirituality in her IHM Page of Life:

“In the second grade my Mother read the poem “Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue” to me. Mary became my second mother to whom I spoke all the time. I ask Mary many times to tell Jesus of my love for Him. When I entered the Congregation, my love and desires to grow closer to Jesus and Mary grew. Very early in religious life I heard about the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ Spirit overwhelmed me. I desired to share my gifts with everyone I met. My sharing is not in words as much as it is in how I treat and speak with others.”

Her serenity, her graciousness, generosity, loving care, gentleness and kindness, flow out of Marguerite’s spirituality. Her sense of humor, her ability to laugh and enjoy the present, her comfort in

being able to laugh at herself – her love of the poor, always reaching out to the needy, indicate the depth to which Marguerite is/was immersed in the life of God.

Again she speaks in her Page of Life: “How often we take so many everyday experiences for granted. How precious the simple gifts of everyday living: speaking, hearing, moving about...the actual Presence of God in each of these normal human activities. How blessed I am to encounter those who have less. What moments of soul touching they bring into my life. It helps me to grow spiritually, to live my life simpler and to appreciate the present moment.”

In December of 1997, I sensed that Marguerite was beginning to be forgetful. She flew into Chicago to drive me to the mandated two week therapy after a cardiac bypass. We enjoyed our time together, especially the holidays of Christmas and New Year, but minor events demonstrated serious memory lapses.

The following year saw a few more serious incidents regarding scheduling Pagani. This was very distressful for Marguerite. Each week, we spoke with one another via the phone. She shared with me her feelings of frustration. During the summer of 1998, Marguerite had a severe case of shingles around her head and ears. At this time Marguerite and I began to discuss seriously her retirement.

By April of 1999, Marguerite finally made her own decision to resign the Pagani ministry. In June 1999, she submitted her letter of resignation.

On Aug. 2, 1999, Rose Ange Leddy accompanied Marguerite to the University of Michigan Medical Center and again on Sept. 24. In his September 1999 report, Dr. Norman Foster of the Neurology Department indicated Marguerite’s “probable Alzheimer disease.”

I cannot say enough about the loving care exhibited towards Marguerite as she continued to live in the Motherhouse 2B area. Although Marguerite had established a somewhat normal pattern – going to Chapel for Liturgy, spend some time visiting the sisters in health care and taking her meals with the community, these sisters kept a loving watchful eye on her.

A major crisis in Marguerite’s early stages was the actual move to the Academy Center during the renovation period. She was not comfortable either in G-Wing or 3E. Oftentimes, the sisters would encounter Marguerite with her pajamas and slippers looking for “2B.” One time, they found her in the construction area with Sister Verinita; another time one of the sister nurses met her walking in front of the Big Boy Restaurant across the street from St. Mary’s Church. There was no choice now, except to place her in 3E, which was then known as the Memory Care Area. Knowing and understanding why she was in 3E angered and frustrated Marguerite. “What’s wrong with me? Why am I here?”

It was amazing that even though she was experiencing such emotional upheavals, Marguerite could still look out for the others in 3E – constantly wanting to help in any way possible. I witnessed Marguerite calming a crying sister who did not understand the aide, walked and took time with Agnes Sun, Marie Liguori Ewald, Irene Mogg and Eugenia Fornier. There wasn’t a sister there that she did not reach out to in a loving gentle manner.

In the move back to the renovated Motherhouse, Marguerite had a beautiful room in our Memory Care area. When I retired in June 2003 and moved into Liguori, I was able to spend quality time with Marguerite. She was a bit more silent but still knew me, and we continued to converse and walk the corridors together. Each evening I stayed with her until she went to bed.

In October, Marguerite fell and broke her hip while going to the bathroom late at night. When released from the hospital, Marguerite was moved to second floor Health Care Center where she remained until her death. As long as we were able, we would push Marguerite in her wheelchair up and down second floor corridors where sisters would come out and interact with her. She loved this. However, the day arrived when this was not possible any longer.

Little by little, I witnessed Marguerite’s deterioration, from speaking several words to jibbering to no sound at all, except for an occasional moan; from walking on one’s own to being pushed in a wheelchair; to a geriatric chair moved only from bedroom to lounge for meals. Oh, the mystery of God’s intrusion in our lives.

Thus, Marguerite began a different way of living the gospel and her life of vows: yes, Marguerite, these past 11 years have truly seen the transformative power of God in you in a mysterious, slow manner, oftentimes hard to understand but with St. Paul you could say, “We are afflicted in every way possible but not crushed.” Marguerite, you have given your treasures away as illness came on – could no longer read, could no longer speak. As St Paul says, “We are struck down but never destroyed.” You, Marguerite, could no longer decide/choose what to do without. The vows were determined for you. Scripture says, “Get purses for yourself that do not wear out, a never failing treasure with the Lord.” Poverty –there was little left. You, Marguerite were left with the aloneness of courage. That was a stark and mysterious lesson you lived for us. Bound to bed or chair – no words, but gospel still.

Marguerite, thank you for being you. Thank you for being my sister, my dearest friend. I know how important friends were in your own life as you wrote so well in your IHM Page of Life:

“Friends have been one of the most important blessings of my life. This gift of friendship, support and love has helped and continues to help me be who I am, strengthening my faith life and gives me the courage to share my gifts with everyone... above all, I deeply appreciate the Sisters I live with in Motherhouse 2B and throughout the Motherhouse. I experience their loving support and friendship. I pray that I, in some way, may return this love and support.

My IHM life journey has taken me into many aspects of human life. Some of the most transformative moments have been here at home, in our own motherhouse, where in reaching out in hospitality to other IHMs my journey of life assumes a deeper hue as God’s presence in me reaches out to God’s presence in each of my sisters.”

Marguerite, ciao – dearest sister; beloved friend – ciao.

Written and presented by Josephine M. Sferrella, IHM
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