

**Remembering Sister Jeanne (Marie Austin) Garvin**  
**June 18, 1927 – March 21, 2010**



The following quote is a good summary of the focus of Sister Jeanne Garvin's life. "The one thing necessary can always be found in the present moment." This will be revealed as you get a picture of her life.

Jeanne was born on June 18, 1927 in Toledo, Ohio, to Austin Edward Garvin and Edna Adeline Todd. She was the first of three girls – Betty Lou was born the following year and Janet was born 10 years later. Jeanne and Betty Lou were very close because of the slight age difference. It was the three of them until Betty Lou's death in 2003. Then, Jeanne told Janet, "It's just the two of us now, kid."

The family moved to Detroit in 1934. However, she always maintained her loyalty to Ohio at the annual U of M – Ohio State game.

After graduating from St. Cecilia School in June, 1945, Jeanne entered the IHM community on July 1, 1945. Throughout the Postulate and Novitiate her classmates knew she was one who really kept the rules set before us. There was always a naiveté about Jeanne plus a strong sense of commitment.

Near the end of her novitiate she had one of her directed teaching experiences in Grade One at St. Mary's school here in Monroe. I was her partner and we both tried very hard to absorb and implement Sister Pierre Marie's suggestions and her experienced style of teaching. We had our problems but we weathered that experience and went on to our own classrooms after our first profession on Jan. 2, 1948.

Jeanne's first assignment was to St. Charles in Detroit where she taught the second-graders. She continued in the primary grades for the next 23 years in four other Detroit parochial schools using the skills honed under the direction of Sister Pierre Marie. In 1986 she assumed the role of principal at St. Patrick in Carleton and then at St. Cyprian in Riverview.

One of Jeanne's assignments was to Most Holy Trinity School in Detroit. In the summary of her teaching experiences she added what she called "A Cherished Memory" which told of the impact her experience at Holy Trinity had for her. I quote from her Book of Life page

While I was missioned to Holy Trinity  
in the inner city of Detroit,  
the needs of the poor and disadvantaged  
children and their families  
stretched my time and energy  
beyond the school day.

This kind of self-giving became a high priority  
in succeeding ministries.

Jeanne later taught at St. Mary Academy. Sister Ann Pauline, her principal, noted that Jeanne had the ability to break down the cliques that frequently exist among high school students and form a united class spirit. Jeanne found her experience at the Academy both challenging and enriching. She mentioned the joy she had in helping the young women learn a deeper understanding and appreciation of their Catholic faith.

After leaving the Academy, Jeanne was asked to serve the community by assuming the position of director of the housekeepers in the Infirmary. Jeanne not only assigned the women to their specific areas of responsibility but she worked with them – cleaning, scrubbing, buffing and dusting. Nothing was too much for her. Needless to say, this endeared Jeanne to her staff. She also benefited by getting to know them in a very personal way. She gave a good example of a manager who shared the work load of her staff.

Jeanne also served as the treasurer for the Overseas Mission Province for six years while working in the Housekeeping Department.

Jeanne's love for teaching took her back to the classroom from 1998 to 2004 as a kindergarten aide in Sister Marge Fogarty's class at St. Paschal School in Taylor.

As I reviewed Jeanne's yearly commitment forms, I was struck by several of them that seem to reveal Jeanne's grasp of what it means to be a Sister, Servant. In 1997 when she assumed the position of director of housekeepers she wrote that she 'would be able to use her skills and to bring the good news of the gospel by reaching out to the sick and the elderly.' She also saw a global aspect by being a steward of material resources. Later in 2002 when she began her work in the Service Office, she saw it as 'an opportunity to be of service where needed.'

In 2002, a few years before she became a resident in our Health Care Center, she wrote, “One of my vital issues is the reality of aging.” It was around this time that Jeanne began having health problems.

In 2005 in her autobiographical summary she ended with the statement, “My hopes and dreams in my retirement at the Motherhouse are to be of service as long as I am able.” Jeanne kept active and involved in community works and activities until her health made it difficult to get around. You would find her in Chapel in the afternoon or visiting patients throughout the Health Care Center. She learned the art of needlework with plastic canvas and made many items she gave as gifts. The other person was always a great concern of Jeanne’s. She seemed to en flesh the quote I read in the beginning - “The one thing necessary can always be found in the present moment.”

Her stay in the Health Care Center was a time of less responsibility and more time to pray, visit others and work on crafts. She accepted her illness and the pain that was frequently with her. She often expressed her gratitude for the good care given to her and the other residents in the Health Care Center.

A trait of Jeanne’s that everyone noticed was the absolute perfection in her room – everything had a place and was in that place. She was very exact about washing, ironing and cleaning everything she owned.

The quote from our Constitutions on the cover of our leaflets certainly fits Jeanne very well “...we desire to be filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.” Jeanne took a decisive step to fulfill that desire when she gave her ‘Yes’ in 1945 and lived it every day of her life. The final call came last Sunday evening when she gave her heartfelt and final “Yes, Lord, here I am.”

Jeanne, you shared your many gifts with your family, students, coworkers and sisters. Help each of us to be faithful to our role as Sister, Servants. May you now enjoy the fullness of life promised to all faithful servants.

Mary Ann Untener IHM  
March 25, 2010