

Remembering Sister Dorothy Joyce, IHM
Aug. 27, 1913-Sept. 5, 2010



Sister often said she wanted only three sentences at her remembering. But without Dorothy's permission, we decided to add a few more.

Sister Dorothy was born in Chicago to Charles and Catherine Joyce. She had a very close-knit family. Loving parents, a devoted sister, Reine, and her two brothers, Bud and Harold, have preceded her in death.

She entered the IHM community in 1932, received her B.A. from Marygrove and her master's degree from the University of Detroit. This training enabled her to become a successful teacher for children

whom she loved. Her firmness, mitigated by her kindness and a good sense of humor, alleviated most challenging situations. For example, when teaching eighth-grade boys, they had a field day with her name – Sister Marcianna – due to Rocky Marciano, who was a famous boxer. She gently, but firmly impressed on them that now her name was Sister Dorothy and what a joy it was for her to go back to her baptismal name. From then on there was no more “Rocky.” On other occasions she showed her sense of wit when she had an occasional lapse of memory of a child's name. She would call a boy “Oscar” or Lazarus” or a girl “Oswella” – everyone enjoyed this.

Dorothy expressed in her many commitment forms a great desire to help children develop intellectually and to achieve their potential. She wrote: “I want them to be aware of their obligation to help in the social problems facing them. I work hard for these goals, especially with Afro-American children, trying to instill values taught by Jesus.” Dorothy spent over 60 years teaching in pre-school, primary and elementary grades.

Of significance was her work with Sister Regina as an aide in a poor, all-black, school, trying to teach each child the awareness of God's love. Her philosophy was that when we teach and treat others as Jesus did, we instill a spirit of peace.

One day while helping the children, a little girl wanted to talk with Dorothy. She said she had a wonderful, kind grandfather, but that he was sad and lonely because his wife had died. With all the innocence of a child, she looked at Dorothy and asked her if she would marry her grandfather! The child then added if Dorothy did, her mother would bake a white cake! We all enjoyed this incident. But, it also shows that this child saw in Dorothy a kind and loving person who would make a good wife for her grandfather.

In later years at St. Rene's school reunion, approximately 400 former students, now in their 40s and 50s, lined up, showering her with signs of affection and gratitude for her help and guidance in teaching. Together, they shared and laughed over "old times."

Dorothy was a fervent enthusiast of sports. One day as a young girl, she went to a baseball game in Chicago and caught the ball. Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig signed the ball. She was so excited; she gave it to her grandfather to keep. However, as happens in the best of families, her brother, Bud, borrowed it from the grandfather's drawer to use in a game. But it rained that day, and all the famous names on the ball disappeared! So goes "glory!"

Always enthusiastic about a ball game, she became a player in our summer games at the Hall. She often would recall how Mother Theresa would say to her, "Go get your crazy friend, Sister Margaret Cutcher, and organize a ball game!" Many of us have fond memories of this.

Looking back on Dorothy's life, we are delighted to witness a strong relationship with friends. She writes, "The richness of my life was brought about by bondedness with friends who enjoyed travel as much as I did." On one occasion, Sister Dorothy and Sister Margaret Cutcher toured the West together. They enjoyed the beauty of the mountains and lakes in Washington and Oregon; an enriching experience and spiritually rewarding.

Sister's later years revealed a strong desire for greater depth in her spiritual life. She writes: "My greatest desire: to love God more and to live in His presence." It was very important to her to make a monthly retreat at a convent run by the Daughters of Divine Providence. This experience was her monthly "boost." Dorothy had spiritual habits that were very significant to her, e.g., devotion to our

Mother of Perpetual Help, St. Joseph, the Rosary and the reception of the sacraments.

In later years, Dorothy's call to be a "care-giver" revealed a sensitive, compassionate response to the elderly in their reclining years. She was an untiring support for Regina and her mother. Regina stated that she treated her mother like she would her own. She was always supportive of her own beloved brother, Bud, taking care of all of his needs while he was a resident in a nursing home. She promised him she would always be there for him. True to her promise, she remained in Chicago until his death, even though she herself was in her mid-nineties.

Sister Dorothy retired to the Motherhouse in October 2009, because of illness. She spent her time in prayer, reading, learning the computer, visiting the sick and enjoying the company of the sisters, the nursing staff and the therapy dog. She loved people and was a joy to everyone, especially Sister Regina Fanning, her companion on mission for 45 years. Dorothy holds a special place in all our hearts.

We would like to share with you one of Dorothy's favorite prayers:

When I come home to Heaven, how joyful it will be!
For on that day, at last, my Risen Lord I'll see.

No greater happiness than to see Him face to face,
To see the love in His eyes, and feel His warm embrace

I've done nothing to deserve that perfect home above.
It was given freely through the grace of Jesus' love.

Then why should earthly cares weigh down upon me so?
They'll be a distant memory when Home at last I go!

Written by Sr. Stephanie Mueller
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