



## Remembering Sister Mary Louise (Eileen Therese) Markey

Oct. 6, 1927 - April 3, 2008

Early in her life – about age 6 – Mary Louise began dancing lessons. She loved letting her body catch the rhythm of the music and while she tolerated the discipline of performing the correct steps, it was the freedom of letting herself move with the music that she loved. Family members found her dancing as she set the table for a meal or dancing while carrying the laundry upstairs to be ironed. In several ways the freedom, grace, and buoyancy of dancing makes it an apt metaphor for Mary Louise's life. There was a brief public aspect of her dancing career when the three Markey girls occasionally performed as a team and on one occasion even entertained on the Boblo boat cruise. Her natural grace and innate sense of rhythm also found expression in acrobatics.

Mary was the fourth child of Nora Mullane and Norman Joseph Markey. Although she grew up in the depression time, the family never went hungry as their father had a steady job on the railroad which even provided the family with opportunities to travel by train, as children younger than 18 could travel free.

Eileen followed Dennis and Norman, and her sister Eileen with whom Mary Louise had a special relationship. On occasion Eileen was the mentor who made certain her younger sister knew and followed the standards of behavior Eileen set. Lois and Jerry completed the family circle.

Mary remembers her first home in St. Boniface parish in the city environment. The move to St. Mary's of Redford was – in her words – heavenly. She reveled in having a yard with grass, flowers, and even roses. Mary Louise's innate sense of beauty came alive in this lovely setting and in the classical beauty and rhythm of the seasons.

While Eileen Markey – 2 ½ years older than Mary Louise – announced her desire to enter the Postulate in Monroe after graduation in July 1945, no one was very surprised. She was the first member of the Markey family to leave home.

The Markey family was well acquainted with the IHM Sisters as their mother, Nora Mullane, was in the first graduating class from Holy Redeemer and for 3 years had Mother Teresa McGivney as her teacher. So Brigid Mullane was her niece. All the Markey's received their education from IHM Sisters.

Mary Louise describes an unexpected invitation to consider religious life herself. It came in an after-school episode one day as she was fulfilling a service charge when the sister in charge asked Mary Lou if she had ever considered becoming a religious. Coincidentally, her English class, under the tutelage of Sr. Marie Edward, was studying the classic, *The Hound of Heaven*. It couldn't have been a better setting to think about the possibility of God's call to religious life.

After Mary Louise graduated she found it necessary to postpone her own hope of entering since the scene now encompassed American's entry into WWII and her two brothers' volunteering for service. Her sensitivity to her parents being alone, especially around holiday time, compelled her to stay home and find a job. She entered in February the following year, 1946.

A few others entered, along with Mary Lou that February, and together with a small group that had entered in the previous September, they formed the group that was to see two Postulate Directresses succumb to cancer. In later years they would recall that on a few days with no Directress in sight, they simply took care of themselves and each other. The group learned early in their formation to be flexible. Immediately after school was out that June, Sr. Ann Regina came home to the Postulate to take charge until the former Directress, Sr. Mary David, had recovered. The group entered the Novitiate on August 15, 1946.

Here life began to gradually take on a different meaning. Looking back on that time Mary Louise felt she experienced a call to a deeper spirituality that was triggered by a course on GRACE and the INDWELLING given by Sr. Theodosia. It was a clear shift that deepened her inner life.

After first profession of vows, Mary Louise was sent to St. Raymond's to teach first grade. This developed into a happy six-year period in her life. Her next mission at St. Rose proved to be more of a challenge. The Sisters lived in three houses. This arrangement, combined with the scenes that occurred in the alley on a regular basis, required some adjusting. The happy note in all this was the presence of a pastor who knew and appreciated good liturgy, Fr. Schoenherr! Mary Lou later saw this as the excellent beginning of her liturgical training that deepened with each pastoral ministry experience.

After three years, Mary Louise was transferred to Sr. Mary of Redford where she lived while teaching at Queen of Hope. Her father, who at this time had a leg amputated, was grateful for her nearby presence.

Mary Louise's transfer to St. Columban's would in time prove to be strategic as it shaped the remaining years of her life. For six years Mary Louise taught,

and because of the proximity to Marygrove, always had student teachers. It was while she was here that she was diagnosed with Lupus, and for a brief period spent some time in the Health Care Center in Monroe. She became aware early in the progression of the disease that there was no cure, but with skilled medical care and her own determination, she learned how to control it. Mary Louise never let the disease determine the direction of her life. She continued to love and focus on her ministry.

She and the sisters she lived with at St. Columban's took advantage of every opportunity to study the documents of Vatican II along with the second pastor, Fr. Jack Tracey, who was there the remaining years Mary Louise ministered there. Abundant opportunities in the archdiocese – under the leadership of Cardinal Deardon – were available to grow in renewed understanding of every aspect of our Catholic faith. The St. Columban's team entered wholeheartedly into every opportunity.

In the Detroit area after Proposal C did not pass in 1970, several schools closed. It was in this altered setting that Mary Louise, at the invitation of the pastor, moved from the school setting to religious education and then into pastoral work in the parish. At the same time the lifestyle of religious women was shifting. Religious superiors were replaced with coordinators in the convents where responsibilities were shared. For Mary the changes became another source of growth--psychologically and spiritually.

After 15 years, Mary Louise moved to St. Blaise and moved quickly into her role of pastoral minister. Her ability to be open to new ministry and her natural love of people made the transition pleasant for all. Mary Louise loved every aspect of her ministry but she had a special interest in working with adults who were interested in exploring the Catholic faith. Mary Louise was among the first to begin the RCIA program in parishes. Later the office of the Catechumenate was opened in Detroit and Mary Louise took advantage of the excellent resource in the Diocese. She applauded the increased role of the laity and invited a team of people in the parish to help in the development of the RCIA at St. Blaise.

Her pastor, Fr. Joseph Killeen, always appreciative of Mary Lou's ministry, was also understanding of her occasional need of a respite because of the ever-present disease of Lupus.

After 16 years at St. Blaise, Mary Louise retired in 1994. She postponed a year of renewal to care for her sister Lois who was in a terminal stage of cancer. The Lupus disease had a pattern of reappearing with various effects on her body. This did not deter Mary Louise from enjoying several months in a renewal program after the death of her sister. Nor did it stop her from

assisting in the care of Sr. Ann Marie Quinlan for a brief time before Ann Marie's death.

When the time came to move to Monroe, she readily agreed, moving first to Norman Towers and then into the Motherhouse. When it became evident that a move to Health Care was needed, Mary Louise responded in her typical gracious manner. Her body was no longer able to dance, but she never stopped responding to the Rhythm of the Spirit that had been such an integral part of her life.

Sr. Donna Hart, IHM  
April 7, 2008