

Remembering Antionette Ruedisueli, IHM
Jan. 21, 1925 – Aug. 16, 2009



Sister Antoinette was born Jan. 25, 1925, in Farmington, Mich., the youngest of five children and the only sister of four brothers – Robert, Leonard, Louis and James. Her parents were Louis William and Margaret Mary (Frerath) Ruedisueli. Her dad was of Dutch ancestry and worked as an engineer with the Detroit Ice Machine Company. Her mother was of German ancestry and had worked as a seamstress in a bridal shop in Bay City. At Sister Antoinette’s baptism at the old St. Mary of Redford Church, she received the name of Mary Antoinette. During her childhood, her family moved repeatedly and she loved country living, especially when her father raised chickens!

Antoinette attended Sacred Heart School in Dearborn and in the eighth grade received a scholarship to St. Mary Academy in Monroe. Though her scholarship to the Academy would set her life course as an IHM Sister, she remained proud of her family and was especially fond of her nieces and nephews and their many accomplishments.

During her four years at St. Mary Academy, Antoinette was nourished intellectually and spiritually by many gifted IHM Sisters. She became a postulant in June 1943 and was subsequently received into the IHM community as a novice on Jan. 2, 1944.

Toni’s profession classmates remember her many virtues and talents. Who else in the Novitiate had perfectly folded handkerchiefs on her shelf, veil and scapular without wrinkles? She always had a sweet smile and gentle giggle at life’s incongruities.

Sister Antoinette taught elementary school for 12 years, first at Blessed Sacrament, then at Holy Redeemer, and then at St. Mary Academy. In the fall of 1958, she began her studies at Marygrove College and later at Laval University in Quebec City where she studied French language and linguistics. She received her doctoral degree from Laval on completion of her dissertation after her return to Marygrove College.

Sister Antoinette began her faculty service at Marygrove College in 1962 and concluded her 14 years of ministry there as director of graduate studies. During her service to Marygrove College, she taught French and participated in the Faculty Studies Abroad Program. She was one of the four IHM Sisters to receive the “Wings for Wisdom” award which provided her with three months of post-graduate study in France. Later, due to declining enrollment in foreign language instruction at the college, Sister Antoinette sought other opportunities to teach and serve students. She migrated to the west side of Michigan to Hartford, joining Sister Eileen Denomme, who was already teaching in the Portage Public Schools. Sister Antoinette then worked on the west side of Michigan for another 10 years, teaching learning disabled students in both the Hartford and Mattawan

public schools. When she retired from teaching in the spring of 1987, she had served for 34 years in various educational organizations, academic subjects and classroom levels.

Sister Antoinette enjoyed the first phase of her retirement at Shadestone Farm for 16 years, where she continued to live with Sister Eileen Denomme and Linda Delene, a professor at Western Michigan University who had first met Sister Antoinette at Marygrove College in the 1960s. Antoinette loved her return to the farm life including the horses, dogs and the wildlife around the grape vineyards. In her time at Shadestone Farm she also worked to help the children of migrants, tutoring them with constant emphasis on education as the pathway to changing lives. Health issues prompted another examination of her living situation in the summer of 2002, and Toni was grateful to return to the renovated Monroe Motherhouse in February 2003.

During her final six-plus years at the Motherhouse, Sister Antoinette relished her return to life among the sisters of the IHM congregation. Toni worked as our IHM Library cataloguer and book processor; her determination to get things done (by her own self-imposed deadlines) despite pain and fatigue was both inspirational and worrisome. Her gift of self wore out her kind and generous heart. Antoinette served as sacristan, was a faithful worker at the monthly social activities of the Motherhouse and helped with other ministries as needed. As her health failed, she remained faithful to others, continuing to help with daily tasks and duties. Toni was truly humble and always shrugged off compliments on her talents and gifts. She never called attention to herself and never initiated conversations about her health, even though she suffered years of pain. Her Monday evening bridge group will really miss her.

Toni was a selfless, gracious individual who lived simply and focused on love embracing all of Creation, especially animals (horses and dogs being her favorites). She was a woman of deep faith being present to the Holy Presence around her. During her recent illness, her favorite mantra was "Jesus, I believe you can heal me if and when you will."

Sister Antoinette answered the call from God during her high school years at the Academy; she relied on God in her different ministries until her life's end with complete faith in God's providence. Her journey here is now over and we say "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Written by Eileen Denomme IHM,
Ms. Linda Delene and
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