

Sister Mary Pius, CSC

(Margaret Isabel Schreiner)

December 31, 1931–November 12, 2023

These memories were lovingly prepared by Sister Suzanne Patterson, CSC, with contributions from the obituary written by Madisen Toth and remembrances shared by several Sisters of the Holy Cross, family and friends.

Margaret Isabel Schreiner was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on New Year's Eve shortly before the clock struck twelve, as the world prepared for 1932. Margaret and her siblings, Frank and Anna, were children of German immigrants, Pius and Margaretha (Kulle) Schreiner. As a "good, sensible girl who was not afraid of work," Margaret was always willing to help a person in need.

She attended Saint Joseph School as a child and Sacred Heart Academy for high school, both in Lancaster. The Holy Cross sisters who taught Margaret at the academy made a significant impression on her. She entered the Congregation on July 26, 1949, only a few months after graduation. Upon reception of the habit, she was given the name, Sister Mary Pius. Sister loved her name; however, most of the time she was simply Sister Pius to everyone.

Sister Mary Pius was graced with the gift of teaching and a love for children. She spent over 20 years in her hometown of Lancaster, initially teaching second grade at St. Anthony of Padua School and later as a catechist in the parish. During her years in Lancaster, she served the school and parish in a variety of ministries. She eventually transitioned to being the parish sacristan and being a eucharistic minister to the elderly, sick, and homebound until 2002.

Shirley Scheiner, Sister Mary Pius' sister-in-law, reminisced about the many Sunday meals she prepared for the family while Sister Mary Pius was in Lancaster. Sister would often come late because she was still busy at the church or helping out a parishioner in need. Shirley mentioned that the

menu did not vary much since Sister Pius had definite requests: chicken or salmon, mashed potatoes, green beans or carrots and, of course, vanilla ice cream, served with strawberries or peaches in season.

Throughout her life Sister Mary Pius was busy as a bee, as the saying goes, or perhaps, as busy as the entire hive! Sister Carmel Marie (Sallows), CSC, laughingly recounted that whenever she went to Lancaster to visit Sister Pius, Sister would be busy taking care of the altar linens or visiting a shut-in or taking someone to a doctor's appointment. Like Martha she was busy about the Lord's work. This dedication to the task at hand was certainly a mark of Sister Mary Pius' fidelity to her daily ministry. Linda Diltz observed, "if there were a task to be done then Sister Mary Pius was on it!"

After transitioning to the motherhouse, Sister Mary Pius served as the sacristan at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Notre Dame until 2012. While she was at the basilica, Sister Pius was responsible for the upkeep of the Log Chapel, which included making sure that the chapel had the necessary linens. Working with the Notre Dame student sacristans was a joy to her, as she developed a rapport with them and would join them at the bowling alley. In her own words, "they keep me young."

In addition, she regularly volunteered with her dear friend Sister Carmel Marie at the Center for Hospice Care in Mishawaka, Indiana. They also would bring communion to residents of the Holy Cross Rehabilitation and Wellness Center in South Bend.

No one enjoyed a good time better than Sister Mary Pius. Certainly, bowling was one of her favorite pastimes. In addition to bowling with ND students, Sister joined Rozanne Nowacki and Dianna Jaronik at the bowling alley on one occasion. On another evening she might be found in the bleachers with Sister Carm at a St. Joseph High School girls' volleyball game cheering the players on to victory. Suzanne Barkdull also remembered that Sisters Carmel Marie and Mary Pius recruited Sue Glover and herself to walk at a hospice fund raiser. At that event the sisters were busy handing out shirts and encouraging the walkers and runners. They truly enjoyed all these events.

Sister Carmel Marie recounted that a gentleman who frequently attended the parish church in Lancaster was very impressed with Sister Pius' dedication. He gifted her with bus passes so that she could travel the country—traveling was something that Sister really enjoyed. She and Sister Carmel Marie made various trips. A most memorable one was to Montreal, Canada.

Several times the two friends combined ministry with visiting friends. One summer they joined the sisters in Park City, Utah, serving as tutors in the summer school program. Sister Mary Ann Pajakowski, CSC, shared that children and parents alike appreciated their help and all the fun they had together. Another adventure took them to Santiago, Chile. They stayed with Sister Carm's niece and, accompanied by a guide, they visited children in nearby orphanages. Again, everyone involved was more than happy that the sisters had come.

Father Don Fetters, CSC, recalls Sister Pius fondly. When he came to see her recently, Father Don told the story of how Sister Pius introduced him to the ice cream machine, which used to be in the convent dining room pre-pandemic. Sister really liked her ice cream—especially vanilla. Sisters Vivian Mary Mastromatteo, CSC, and Alice Clare Hosty, CSC, both described Sister's ice cream cone as a mile-high creation! I myself remember that when we got together for a cookout Sister Mary Pius always opted for a hot dog. Her standing order was two hot dogs in one bun which she enjoyed with her coleslaw and baked beans! Clearly, she was a woman who appreciated the finer things in life!

During Sister Mary Pius' last few years, when verbal expression was difficult, Sister still communicated with her eyes. They often twinkled and danced as care providers tried to tempt her to eat or drink a bit more.

We can be sure that Sister's eyes sparkled with loving excitement as she was greeted by her Lord, whom she served so long and so well. Farewell, dear friend. We will really miss you.