

Sister M. John Margaret (Dietzen), CSC

(Mary Frances Dietzen)

January 25, 1943—August 25, 2022

These memories were lovingly prepared and written by Sister Mary Louise Full, CSC, and Sister Maureen Grady, CSC. Sister Mary Louise read them at Sister John Margaret's funeral on September 1, 2022.

“Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come... Be prepared! (Matthew 24:42,44)

This was the scripture reading from the liturgy on the day Sister died. Sister John Margaret was always prepared. You could count on her to be on time, no matter the occasion: attending liturgy, dining at table, remembering a birthday, and especially reminding the rest of us of important meetings or events.

Several days before her death, she asked Sister Karla if a copy of her funeral information was at hand. Even though her sudden passing at supper on August 25 was a shock to her local community members, family, bandmates and all who knew her, Sister John Margaret was on God's time, and she was prepared.

The daughter of John and Margaret Dietzen, Mary Frances, from Danville, Illinois, was the youngest of five children: her brothers, Jack, Bob and Don, and her sister Catherine Dolores. Mary Frances came to us through the generosity of a close and devoted family who loved her deeply and nurtured the unique talents that were hers to offer. To them, and particularly in remembrance of her mother and father, we are grateful to the Dietzen family for sharing the gift of their daughter with Holy Cross.

Her niece, Teri Becker, shared that she and the extended family of nieces and nephews, as well as the next generation, have fond

memories of Sister John Margaret. She joined in family celebrations of holidays and the sacraments, including family dinners with long talks around the dinner table, and remembers the wonderful, contagious laughs of both John Margaret and Catherine Dolores.

As a young girl, Mary Frances felt a desire to serve God and discerned her call to religious life. On September 4, 1960, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, becoming a member of Our Lady of the Trinity band. She joined her older sibling, now Sister M. Catherine Dolores, CSC.

Sister John Margaret was entrusted by the Congregation with service opportunities that demonstrated her keen intellect and boundless energy. She enjoyed a remarkable ministerial career serving in multiple educational institutions at the elementary and junior high level as teacher and principal over a period of 27 years. Sister went on to hold leadership positions as religious superior in Saint Mary's and Rosary convents, as well as Area coordinator. She showed a deep concern and compassion for the sisters and felt a deep calling to be with those who were seriously ill. She also brought a spirit of joy and excitement to the sisters during the holidays. Sister John Margaret and Sister M. Carolita (Hart), CSC, would spend hours shopping for special Christmas gifts for the sisters, a task they thoroughly enjoyed. She had an artistic touch, was well organized, and enjoyed decorating the home of her local community wherever she lived.

In later years, Sister ministered to those in retirement medical facilities. In recent months, failing health confined her to Saint Mary's Convent.

Her time of sabbatical, first at Wellsprings in New York, followed by a six-month stay at Marymount Mercy Centre in Australia, was an adventure of a lifetime and held many lasting friendships and memories for which she remained always grateful.

She was an amazing correspondent who, within moments of hearing that someone was in the hospital, dropped off a lovely card on the

counter at the information desk. She remembered birthdays, important anniversaries of family members, sisters, staff and other friends. Teri also commented on the personal, thoughtful messages she sent to each family member, expressing how much she loved each one and prayed for them daily. Sister John Margaret was dedicated to this ministry.

One of Sister John Margaret's outstanding talents, which she shared everywhere she went, was her lovely singing voice. When it came to participating in community programs that called upon the members of her band to sing, we counted on her to keep us in tune and carry us through; especially singing our band rendition of the formidable "How Lovely is Your Dwelling Place."

Several weeks before she died, she attended a band celebration during which conversation turned to a review of "the good old days!" She seemed to thoroughly enjoy reminiscing about so many experiences which we shared together. And now, here we are, reminiscing about her. Saying her name causes us to pause, to remember, to reflect and to bless Mary Frances Dietzen, Sister John Margaret, who journeyed with us in the grace of time and space, and who marked our lives along the way.

A happy life, well lived in the service of others, Sister John Margaret touched the lives of countless persons as teacher, principal, superior, administrator and volunteer. Eager to meet her God when the time came, even with its unannounced swiftness, she was prepared. As the sisters gathered for prayer at the time of her death, they found her peaceful, holding her rosary to which she was devoted and prayed daily. May our Sister John Margaret rest in peace.