Sister Magdelaine Hill, OP
1929 – 2015

Sister Magdelaine Hill, baptized Joan Marie and known to family and friends as Mag, was born on July 20, 1929, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her parents, William and Magdalene (Hunter) Hill, were married in 1913 and were already the proud parents of Magdalene, William, Veronica, and James when Mag was born. In her autobiography, Sister Mag gave us this description of her family.

“My maternal grandmother [Nana] lived with my parents from the earliest days of their marriage. Nana had lost three children in infancy and her husband died at the age of 40. As you see, I was raised in a household of adults: Nana, Mom, Dad, Maggie, 15, Bill, 13, and Ronnie [Veronica] 11. My brother Jimmy had died in 1928.

The year I was born, 1929, marked the great depression, but Mom and Dad worked hard to care for their children. Mom [had] a part-time job at the neighborhood Catholic hospital. Nana [was] the built-in baby-sitter.

When I was three years old, the biggest event of my young life occurred on November 27, when my baby sister, Pat was born.

Sister Mag attended grade school at Most Blessed Sacrament in Southwest Philadelphia, staffed by the IHM Sisters. She remembered first grade as a “whole new adventure; one of the best! I learned to read and I could use that skill to entertain my sister Pat.”

In 1947, Sister Mag graduated from West Philadelphia Catholic Girls High School. This central high school was staffed by religious and lay faculty. The Sisters of Christian Charity were one of the six congregations of women religious serving on the faculty.

On August 31, 1947, Sister Mag began her postulancy year with the Sisters of Christian Charity of Mendham, New Jersey. A year later, on August 21, 1948, she was received into the congregation and given the religious name, Sister Magdelaine. Following first profession on August 21, 1950, Sister Mag taught in the following elementary schools: St. Mary, Scranton, Pennsylvania; Blessed Trinity, Hazleton, Pennsylvania; Holy Cross, Baltimore, Maryland; St. Boniface, Williamsport, Pennsylvania; and Immaculate Conception, Bronx, New York.

By 1956, Sister Mag was being assigned to teach English courses in high schools, beginning with Monsignor Bornemann Memorial Central Catholic High, in Reading, Pennsylvania. The school is known locally as Reading Central Catholic High School. Sister Mag taught there for thirteen years. During this period, her mother died in 1962
and in 1964 she received her bachelor’s degree in secondary education from Fordham University in New York City.

In 1969, Sister Mag was assigned to teach at Bishop Moore High School in Orlando, Florida. This was the beginning of a transforming experience for her. It was the year Mag received her master’s degree in English from the University of Notre Dame. It also was a time of renewal for religious congregations following Vatican II. Sister Mag wrote,

> During the four years [1969-1974] I taught in Florida I met the Dominican Sisters who staffed St. Helen [School] in Vero Beach. Sister Theresa Nightingale and I both served on the Diocesan Sisters’ Council. Currently, Sister Susan Kresse is Religious Education Director at St. Margaret Mary, Winter Park, and this is the community in which I lived. In these Sisters I have seen a strong sense of community which admits individual differences and provides a life of prayer and work compatible with the society it serves.

In 1973, Sister Mag initiated the process of transferring from the Sisters of Christian Charity to the Adrian Dominicans that was finalized in June 1975. This all occurred within the eight years she taught journalism courses and oversaw the school newspaper and yearbook at Bishop Moore High School. Reflecting on her decision to transfer, Sister Mag wrote,

> I have found much peace and happiness in my decision to seek a transfer of communities – a decision which was reached only after much prayer and soul searching. Truly I feel blessed by the Lord in a very special way. The time I spent preparing for this transfer has been a fruitful period in my life. I have grown in so many ways and learned about myself so that I can bring a richer, more human, loving person to the Father.

In 1977, Sister Mag accepted the position of principal at St. Margaret Mary in Winter Park, Florida. When asked by a newspaper reporter about problems facing elementary schools, Sister Mag responded by focusing on the school as a part of the parish community. She said:

> Being principal of an elementary school for the last two years has been a real eye-opener for me. Young children are so capable academically and [they] can be challenged from the first grade on – elementary school is not just babysitting. The students need to see themselves as part of the greater community – the parish – and feed into parish activities.

In 1979, Sister Mag returned to Bishop Moore High School and served as assistant principal and worked on curriculum development. She continued in this position for eleven years. It was during this period that Sister Mag's father died in 1983.

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In 1990, Sister Mag returned to Philadelphia to care for her older sister Maggie, who was recovering from leg surgery. She taught journalism and was moderator of the yearbook at St. Hubert High School. She also was a substitute teacher at Our Lady of Ransom School. In her annals for that year, Sister Mag wrote,

> Although separated by physical distance, I felt very close to Adrian especially my mission group. I had the opportunity to introduce many people to the Adrian Dominicans since there are none in this area.

After teaching one year at St. Hubert High School, Sister Mag became a full-time teacher at Our Lady of Ransom, where she would continue to minister for the next thirteen years. She lived with and cared for her older sister Maggie, who was suffering from a variety of physical problems. Sister Mag was also active in the parish and eventually became a member of the parish RCIA team. Her sister died in 2001.

Sister Mag retired from classroom teaching in 2004 and began serving Our Lady of Ransom Parish as liturgy coordinator. During her seven-year ministry at the parish, she became a live-in companion and care-giver for her sister Ronnie until she died in November 2014.

Three months later, Sister Mag returned to Adrian and lived in the Dominican Life Center until she died on October 1, 2015, at the age of eighty-six and in the sixty-fifth year of her religious profession.

During the wake service Sister Mary Ann Caulfield, Chapter Prioress of the Florida Mission Chapter, said,

> Mag, Ronnie and Sister Joan Mary shared a beautiful evening prayer ritual: Each night they would get on the phone with each other and share the day’s events. They would always end with the Hail Mary and a song which Sister Joan Mary led. Sister Joan Mary, I am sure each evening this prayer ritual will continue with Mag and Ronnie as you feel their connection with you during your night prayers.

Sister Mag’s nephew, John Scholle, read a message his daughter, Jackie McTague, had written for the family.

> She was blessed with a bounty of gifts. She was loving, smart, humble, devout to her faith, loyal, steadfast and hard-working. But the most special thing about her was her limitless charity – she kept nothing for herself. She opened her heart to everyone, graciously letting others feast off of everything she had. She gave and she shared her gifts and in doing so, enhanced the lives of all those around.

> To her family, she provided selfless love, always welcoming them into her home and into her arms. In times of sadness and sickness, she gave physical care as

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2 Mag’s younger sister Pat who is a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur
well as comfort for the aching hearts. She was a wonderful daughter, sister, and aunt.

Sisters Susanne Hofweber and Maris Stella Beaufait shared this remembrance,

She lived deeply and brought a quiet joy into our small community at #319 Regina. She enjoyed her life and brought joy with her majestic grace.

In her homily, Sister Carleen Maly said,

The readings\textsuperscript{3} for this celebration of the life of Sister Mag Hill were those that Mag and Sister Joan Mary, her sister, and their family selected for the funeral of their sister, Ronnie, last November. In the first reading from Romans we hear Paul’s clear, rather succinct explanation of the three virtues of faith, hope, and love. And as Paul says, ‘this hope will not leave us disappointed because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.’

I believe that at the core of her being Mag embraced the immense love of God nurtured by her parents, siblings, extended family, from her experiences in community and in her personal life of prayer.

\textsuperscript{3} Romans 5:5-11, John 6:37-40
Center: Billy holds his baby sister, Joan Marie (the future Sister Magdelaine).
Right: Sister Magdelaine cuts the cake for her Silver Jubilee with the Sisters of Christian Charity, 1973.

With Central Florida Mission Group, 1996 – standing, from left: Sisters Cora Campbell, Julie Sullivan, Magdelaine Hill, Patricia Caulfield, Clarice Moyle, and Mary Ann Caulfield; seated, from left: Sisters Diane McMeekin, Jean Irene McAllister, Mary Miday, and Patricia Eileen Consier; and kneeling, from left: Sisters Rosemary Finnegan, Julia McCarthy, and Donna Baker.

Left: Family and friends gather to celebrate the birthday of Sister Magdelaine’s father, William Hill. Right: Ronnie Hill, Sister Magdelaine, and Sister Joan Mary Hill, SND, with their father.